

GBA

Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme Impact Study Phase 2 Report Executive Summary



Overview

- The “Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme” (hereafter the Scheme) was launched by the Government in early 2021. It aims to encourage enterprises with operations in both Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area (hereafter the GBA) to recruit and deploy local university / tertiary institution graduates to work in the Mainland cities of the GBA. As of mid-2022, most employees under the Scheme have been working for about nine months.
- In order to assess the effectiveness of the Scheme and offer policy recommendations to the Government, MWYO and the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce (hereafter, HKGCC) have launched a longitudinal research study in four phases. Online surveys were conducted from September to October 2021 for Phase 1, and from March to April 2022 for Phase 2. HKGCC distributed the questionnaire to the employees through its members for Phase 2.
- This report focuses on the employees’ changes in perception and attitude towards the Scheme and the Mainland cities of the GBA, in order to assess the Scheme’s effectiveness. The questionnaire for the employees used in Phase 2 is identical to that of Phase 1, except for the inclusion of 3 new questions.
- We received 187 valid responses from the employees for Phase 2. According to official statistics from the Labour and Welfare Bureau and Labour Department, 1,090 people were initially employed under the Scheme, but 194 had resigned by late April 2022. Therefore, the response rate of the remaining employees is around 21%. Among those who completed the Phase 2 questionnaire, 123 of them had also done so in Phase 1, which amounts to 88% of the total number of respondents in Phase 1.
- Fisher’s exact test (a statistical test) was used to analyse the survey data and determine whether there is a significant relationship between two categorical variables by calculating the p-value. Fisher’s exact test is appropriate for this study, as the sample size is relatively small.
- Since we estimated that we only received responses from 21% of all current employees, and do not have official data from the relevant Government departments for reference, sampling bias may be inevitable. Also, as the survey is of a voluntary nature, there is a possibility of selection bias if employees with a more favourable view of the Scheme are more likely to complete the questionnaire. As a result, our observations from the data may overestimate the level of positive feedback for the Scheme.

Results

Demographic and socio-economic background of all respondents in Phase 2

- 187 employees completed the Phase 2 questionnaire and 123 of them had also completed the Phase 1 questionnaire.
- The sample covered an equal proportion of male and female respondents. About half of the respondents were 25 years old or above. Most respondents (82%) stated that they had regular contact with at least one friend or relative in the Mainland, i.e. connections in the Mainland.
- Employees who were older, male or had connections in the Mainland were generally more willing to develop a long-term career in the GBA cities ($p < 0.05$). Those with Mainland contacts were more certain about their career plans in the GBA. Only 19% of those who had connections in the Mainland were unsure about how long they would be willing to work in the GBA, while 39% of those without connections had a similar sentiment.
- Employees with Mainland connections generally had more positive opinions of the Scheme. 63% of those with Mainland connections reported that the Scheme could meet nearly all of their expectations. Only 29% of those without Mainland connections felt the same. Those with Mainland connections were more inclined to consider that the Scheme supported their career development, professional development and life development beyond their career.
- 78% of respondents held a bachelor's degree and the other 22% held a master's degree or above. Most employees took business-related subjects in university, with 38% studying accounting or finance and 24% studying business management.
- Respondents who graduated from Mainland universities were more interested in developing a long-term career in the GBA. Among the respondents who were Mainland graduates, 61% would be willing to work in the GBA for over two years. Among the respondents who graduated in Hong Kong or elsewhere, only 33% had a similar sentiment ($p < 0.01$). If an employee had studied in the Mainland, he/she would be more interested in joining the Scheme and more likely to stay in the GBA in the long run.
- Half of the respondents did not have full-time work experience before joining the Scheme, while 33% had less than two years of experience. Among the 83 respondents who had full-time work experience before entering the Scheme, 47% earned HKD18,000 or less in their previous jobs. For those working in the professional and business service industry (including public relations, legal services, accounting services, etc.) under the Scheme, 71% of them earned more than HKD18,000 in their previous jobs. In contrast, only 30%

of employees in the banking and insurance sector made more than HKD18,000 prior to participating in the Scheme.

- Under the Scheme, the industry which hired the most respondents was the banking and insurance sector (40%), followed by the professional and business service industry (37%).

Comparison between Phase 1 and Phase 2

- Overall, employees responded favourably to the Scheme in both Phase 1 and Phase 2. For several questions regarding their opinion of the Scheme, the proportion of respondents who gave positive responses fell slightly, but they remained in the majority.
- In Phase 2, the vast majority (70%) of respondents considered their career development plans in the GBA to be clear, down by 13 percentage points from 83% in Phase 1 ($p < 0.05$). During Phase 4 of the study, we shall conduct focus groups with employees in order to explore this shift in attitude in greater detail.
- The proportion of employees who were willing to work in the GBA for more than two years increased by five percentage points to 44%. The share of those who were unsure about how long they would be willing to work in the GBA also increased by eight percentage points to 19%. A sizable fraction of employees did not have a clear preference on whether or not to develop a long-term career in the GBA. Throughout Phase 1 and Phase 2, over 75% of employees considered that their current companies were suitable for them in the long run.
- Most employees expected the Scheme to help them further their careers (88%), gain more work experience (69%) or expand their network (58%). The proportion of respondents who reported that the Scheme could meet nearly all their expectations decreased by 11 percentage points from 65% in Phase 1 to 54% in Phase 2 ($p < 0.001$).
- In Phase 2, 63% of respondents considered that the Scheme supported their professional development, down from 78% in Phase 1 ($p < 0.05$). In Phase 2, 86% of respondents considered that the Scheme supported their career development, down from 93% in Phase 1 ($p < 0.01$). In both cases, those who responded favourably to the Scheme remained the majority. The proportion of those who considered that the Scheme supported their life development beyond their career remained stable throughout the two phases.

- When completing the Phase 2 questionnaire, nearly all employees (95%) had been working under the Scheme for over six months. 22% of employees stated that they worked in an innovation and technology post, and half of these I&T employees had started working in the Mainland cities of the GBA. Nearly 60% of employees considered that their respective companies provided enough training throughout the two phases. The proportion of employees who believed that their companies offered insufficient training increased from 13% in Phase 1 to 23% in Phase 2 ($p < 0.05$). Most employees were satisfied with their performance at their current companies, increasing from 78% in Phase 1 to 84% in Phase 2.
- Employees generally developed a deeper understanding of various aspects of life in the Mainland. Comparing the two phases, the proportion of employees who understood Mainland companies' norms and organisational culture increased significantly by 23 percentage points ($p < 0.001$). The proportion of employees who had knowledge of the subsidies provided by Mainland authorities and healthcare services in the Mainland also increased by 23 and 14 percentage points respectively. However, around half of the employees lacked an understanding of the tax payment requirements and the social security system. The proportion of employees who had knowledge in these areas increased marginally, from around 45% in Phase 1 to around 50% in Phase 2.
- Employees generally became more accustomed to living and working in the Mainland, as shown in the Phase 2 survey. 75% of employees adapted to the norms and organisational culture of Mainland companies, up from 59% in Phase 1 ($p < 0.05$). Employees also became better adjusted to interpersonal communication (increase of 12 percentage points) and public safety (increase of 9 percentage points) in the Mainland ($p < 0.05$).
- Most employees spent their spare time travelling within Mainland China and socialising with their Mainland friends. In Phase 2, 65% of employees stated that they often or sometimes travelled to other places in the Mainland for leisure, increasing from 48% in Phase 1. In Phase 2, 73% of employees stated that they often or sometimes socialised with their Mainland friends, up from 65% in Phase 1 ($p < 0.01$).

Conclusion

- Most employees continued to hold a positive view on the Scheme after working for about nine months.
- Living and working in the Mainland allowed the employees to learn more about different aspects of Mainland society and culture, especially work culture, government subsidies and healthcare services. They also became more well-adapted to living and working in the Mainland cities of the GBA. More of them spent their leisure time travelling and socialising as they developed friendships and learned about local history and culture.
- In view of the findings, we propose that the Government should continue to implement the Scheme. It is essential for Hong Kong's youth development to offer more GBA employment opportunities. The continued success of the Scheme depends on the avid participation of young workers and employers. Employees under the Scheme may learn from each other and persuade their peers in Hong Kong to consider seeking work in the GBA, thus promoting overall GBA youth employment. If the Government terminates the Scheme after only one cohort, the positive effects will be dwarfed, and the promotional effect of GBA youth employment will be greatly diminished. Therefore, the Government should continue to be the leader and facilitator of promoting youth employment in the GBA, despite the many challenges ahead. If the Government decides to extend the Scheme, it should clearly redefine the policy objectives and positioning of the Scheme in order to maximise its benefit. This could serve as a continuation of the pilot scheme, so as to further assess whether the Scheme should be implemented in the long run.

About Us



Thought Leadership on Youth Development

MWYO is an independent think tank that focuses on youth issues in Hong Kong. Our work spans across research studies and surveys, advocacy and education, and training and capacity building. We actively engage and work with everyone who has a stake in the positive outcome of young people's development: youth, parents, headmasters, teachers, social workers, employers, civil society leaders, governments, and political parties. Our mission is to be a thought leader in all aspects of youth development in Hong Kong.

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