Hairdressing, Beauty and Wellbeing

Would you enjoy helping people to look and feel good? Are you interested in developing your practical and creative skills? If so, this career area may be what you're looking for.

Fashion trends and the development of new cosmetic, beauty and hair care products are important factors for change in the industry. The use of barber shops has been growing due to the trend for male grooming with beard grooming being very popular.

The UK hair, beauty, barbering and aesthetics sector makes an important contribution to the UK economy, supporting over 275,000 jobs and contributes £9 billion to the economy. [1]

What areas can I work in?

This career area includes: hairdressing, barbering, salon management, beauty therapy, nail therapy, spa therapy, aromatherapy, reflexology, make-up artistry and body art (tattooing and piercing).

Related work is also available in other areas such as: reception (although online booking is growing in popularity in larger salons and salon chains), sales, marketing, and hospitality and tourism (in health spas and holiday resorts).

To see the routes to getting into each of these sectors, take a look at our Career Pathway.

What kind of companies can I work for?

Possible employers include:

- hairdressing salons (some also offer beauty treatments)
- barber shops
- beauty therapy salons
- nail bars
- health and beauty spas and centres
- tanning salons
- beauty therapy salons or related services in other businesses (such as large department stores, hotels, cruise ships, airlines, leisure centres, wedding consultants, film/TV studios and theatre companies)
- colleges and training centres (for well qualified tutors and lecturers)
- tattoo and piercing studios.

What's the job market like?

Although employment levels have stabilised in recent years, they have not yet returned to pre pandemic levels. However, Nomis data for 2024–2025 shows a notable increase in employment in Scotland's hairdressing and beauty industry. By December 2025, around 13,000 people were working as hairdressers and barbers, up from 8,700 in 2024, while 8,900 were employed as beauticians or in related occupations, compared with 4,600 the previous year. [5]

The hair and beauty industry has a high level of self-employment, with approximately 58% of the UK workforce operating on a self-employed basis. The sector is largely made up of micro businesses, with over 80% employing fewer than five staff and 95% fewer than ten (2024 figures). [2]

Growing demand for wellness tourism and luxury spa experiences has contributed to a 1.7% rise in employment in the UK health and wellness sector each year between 2020 and 2025, bringing total number of employees to 44,670. [4]

However, according to an industry survey in 2025, 45% of UK businesses interviewed said they would reduce the number of people they employed to manage the increased labour costs produced due to measures such as a higher National Minimum Wage and Apprenticeship Minimum Wage rates, along with higher National Insurance contributions. [3]

Facts and figures

- In 2025, there were 17,000 people working as hairdressing and beauty salon managers and proprietors in the UK. [5]
- Less than half of the UK workforce are aged 16-24 years old. [2]
- Nail care services like manicures, pedicures and nail enhancements have seen a surge in demand attributed to the increase in people's focus on wellness and individuality. Social media platforms like TikTok have played a crucial role in promoting independent nail stylists. [6]
- In 2024 the UK health and wellness spa industry had a revenue of £8 billion, and is expected to reach £8.4 billion by 2030. [4]

Want to find out more?

You will find useful information on careers and qualifications in the industry on the Hair and Beauty Industry Authority (Habia) website.

Sources

[1] Respect our Sector, National Hairdressing and Beauty Federation (NHBF) (www.nhbf.co.uk/) (April 2026)

[2] 2024 Industry Statistics for Hairdressing, Barbering and Beauty, National Hairdressing and Beauty Federation (NHBF) (May 2025)

[3] Straightening out the Costs, Barbering and Beauty National Hairdressing and Beauty Federation (NHBF) (January 2025)

[4] Health and Wellness Spas in the UK - Employment (2020-2030), IBISWorld (ibisworld.com/) (November 2025)

[5] Annual Population Survey - Occupation by sex, employment status and full/part-time - Scotland, Nomis (December 2025)

[6] Market Report: Nail Technician, Business Gateway (April 2026)