# Buying, Selling and Related Work

Do you think of yourself as a 'people person', someone who'd enjoy providing information and advice to people looking to buy a product or service? Or maybe you'd prefer to negotiate with suppliers to get the best deal for your company or employer?

If either option applies, then this career area may be a good choice. Whether you are dealing with customers or suppliers you need to have good communication skills, a confident and positive outlook, and the ability to deal with complaints while you are busy.

The retail industry remains the UK's largest private sector employer, with 2.8 million jobs and accounting for nearly 10% of all UK jobs. In 2025, there were 189,925 wholesale and retail employers in the UK. [2]

## What areas can I work in?

As buying and selling affects most types of business, a wide variety of careers are available. Jobs and courses are split into three sectors: buying; call centres; and retail and sales.

This doesn't include careers in warehousing – you'll find those in the Transport and Distribution career area.

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?

Of the huge range of companies to work for, possible employers include:

- retail stores and outlets
- local authority and public services, including the Civil Service and National Health Service
- call centres for businesses such as banks, insurance companies, utility firms and supermarkets
- construction and manufacturing
- medical sales companies and pharmaceuticals.

## What's the job market like?

The buying, selling and related work industry is one of the biggest employers in Scotland, with the retail sector alone remaining Scotland's largest private sector employer. 208,000 people worked in Scottish retail across 14,030 businesses in 2025. Retail is one of the largest contributors to the Scottish economy. [2]

However, as predicted in recent years, the number of retail jobs have continued to fall across the UK. The British Retail Consortium (BRC) reported that the retail sector has lost around 74,000 jobs in the last year. Retailers say that higher employment costs, changes to labour regulations and weak consumer demand are affecting staffing decisions. [3]

In Scotland, as of December 2025, there were around 36,500 people employed in customer service occupations, with 9,200 of those working in call and contact centre operations. [1]

There are lots of ways to get into these jobs. You can start straight from school with few or no qualifications, where you can work your way up to a senior position, such as retail manager. Many employers provide the opportunity to work towards vocational qualifications on the job to help with promotion. There are Modern Apprenticeship frameworks for both retail and procurement.

## Facts and figures

- The majority of top retailers in the UK are supermarket giants. Tesco is the largest, with 17 billion pounds more in sales value than Amazon UK. [4]
- As of December 2025 there were 136,300 people working in sales occupations in Scotland, with 78,300 of those working as sales and retail assistants, and 17,600 working as retail cashiers and checkout operators. [1]
- As of December 2025 there were 7,000 buyers and procurement officers in Scotland, compared to 6,500 in the previous year. [1]
- In 2025, the average retail pay in Scotland was £12.83 an hour. [2]

## Want to find out more?

You can find out more about retail in Scotland on the Scottish Retail Consortium website.

## Sources

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

[2] Retail in Numbers, British Retail Consortium (June 2026)

[3] UK retail workforce shrinks as cost pressures hit sector, Yahoo Finance (11 March 2026)

[4] Retail Trade in the UK – statistics and facts, Xin Ou, Statista (17 December 2025)