

Archivist

Archivists collect, assess, organise, study and preserve historical records and documents. These may include rare books or manuscripts, maps, plans, film, video, photographs, audio and digital files. They also give people access to these materials and help them to use them.

The Work

You could be:

- looking after and keeping documents and other materials in good condition, in the right storage conditions
- arranging the repair of damaged material
- identifying, dating, cataloguing and indexing all materials
- assessing the historical and cultural importance of archived materials
- maintaining hard copy and digital records
- helping people to use and interpret the archives
- responding to queries from, and carrying out research for, the public and organisations
- converting original or old documents into digital format
- managing staff and budgets.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

The Archives and Records Association (ARA) recommend minimum salaries for archivists. As of 2025, these are as follows.

- Para-professional (working towards Foundation Membership or degree) - £25,903.
- Lower Management Level 1 (a Foundation Member or completed a degree) - starting range of £33,478 - £39,678.
- Lower Management Level 2 (possibly working towards Registered Membership) - £39,678.
- Middle Management (possibly working towards Fellowship) - £49,599.
- Senior Management (may be qualified as a Fellow) - £68,200.

Conditions

- Working hours are normally 9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.
- You work indoors in an office, reading room or library.
- You might have to travel to other places to assess materials.
- In some jobs you might work alone much of the time.

- Part time work might be available.
- You might have to work in dusty storage areas.

Getting In

- To become an archivist you need a first degree (SCQF Level 10) followed by a postgraduate (SCQF Level 11) qualification in archive and records management, recognised by the Archives and Record Association. In Scotland, recognised courses are run by the University of Glasgow and the University of Dundee.
- Elsewhere in the UK and Ireland, recognised courses are offered by Aberystwyth University, University College Dublin, University College London and the University of Liverpool.
- For entry to a postgraduate course, you need a good Honours degree (2:1 or above) in any subject. History, modern or ancient languages, library studies or information science are particularly useful. Entry to a first degree normally requires 4-5 Highers in relevant subjects.
- For some specialisms you need a knowledge of Latin.
- Entry to postgraduate courses is very competitive and previous work experience, paid or voluntary, is essential. Most archive collections in the UK will take volunteers. The Archives and Records Association holds lists of paid traineeships and voluntary opportunities.
- Entry is very competitive. You will almost certainly have to do some voluntary work before getting a paid job.

You could work for local authorities, in museums, universities, hospitals, central government and industry. Most jobs are advertised through the Archives and Records Association and the Information and Records Management Society (IRMS).

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- logical and methodical
- accurate and attentive to detail
- able to work alone and as part of a team
- willing to learn about new developments in the storage, conservation and interpretation of records
- able to work to deadlines.

You should have:

- a genuine interest in history and the importance of archives
- good communication skills, both verbal and written
- good IT skills
- excellent research skills
- patience and perseverance, when researching old records.

Training

- For those who do have professional qualifications, the Archives and Records Association runs continuing professional development courses, as well as a training scheme in conservation for members who work in

this field.

- The Information and Records Management Society (IRMS) also runs short training courses.

Getting On

- This is a very small profession and promotion is very competitive.
- Once qualified you can enrol onto the ARA Registered Membership programme. You usually need three years experience before submitting a portfolio.
- After at least nine years experience, you can apply for Fellow Membership.
- To gain promotion you may have to move from one type of employer to another.
- You may have to move to another part of the UK.

More Information

The [Discover! Creative Careers website](#) has careers information and opportunities in the heritage and culture sector, including archive work.

Contacts

Archives and Records Association (UK and Ireland)

Tel: 01823 327 077

Email: ara@archives.org.uk

Website: www.archives.org.uk

X: @ARAScot

Information and Records Management Society (IRMS)

Tel: 01625 664520

Email: info@irms.org.uk

Website: www.irms.org.uk

X: @IRMSociety

Facebook: www.facebook.com/IRMSociety

Museums Association

Tel: 020 7566 7800

Email: info@museumsassociation.org

Website: www.museumsassociation.org/home

X: @MuseumsAssoc

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MuseumsAssoc

National Archives

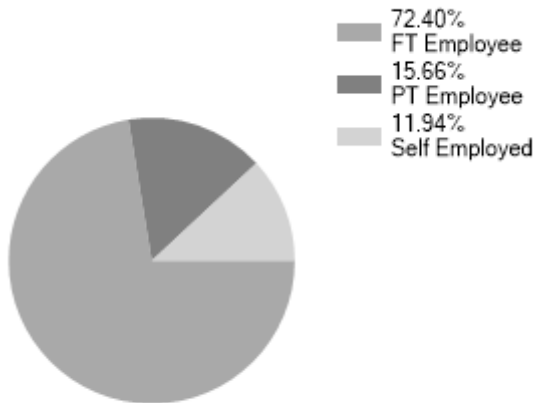
Website: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

X: @UkNatArchives

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheNationalArchives

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

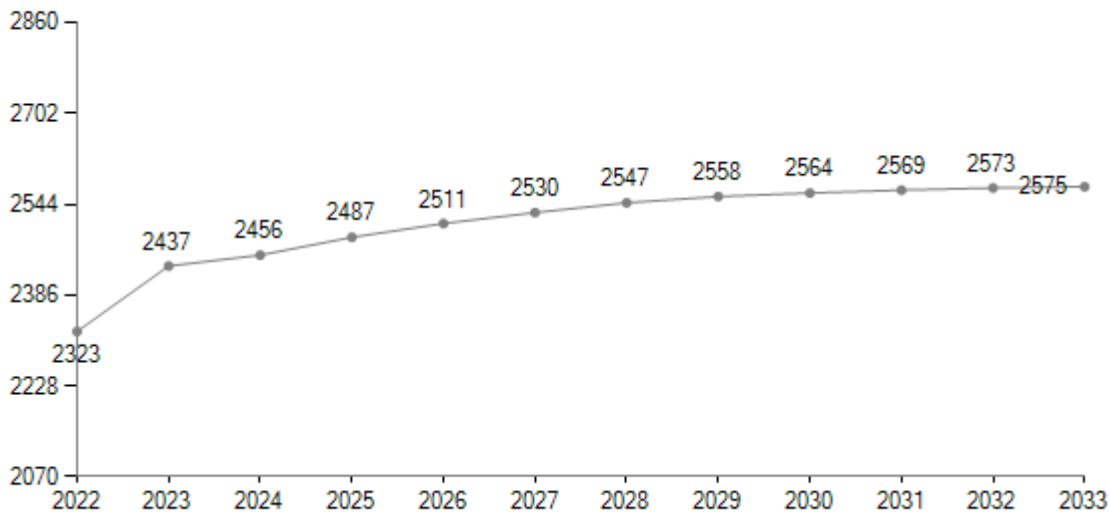


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)