

Retail Assistant

A retail assistant sells goods in shops and stores. These could range from clothing or mobile phone shops to DIY and furniture stores.

The Work

You could be:

- learning about the products sold within the store and keeping items restocked
- discussing what the customer wants and showing what the shop has in stock
- taking orders for things which are out of stock
- if necessary explaining how you can pay by instalments
- working out the total price and taking cash, card or voucher payments
- operating the till which may be computerised with a barcode scanner
- removing security tags and wrapping up goods for customers
- displaying the goods on the shelves and in the window
- dealing with complaints.

Pay

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

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

Starting pay is often based on the National Minimum Wage (NMW) or the National Living Wage (NLW).

As of 1 April 2026 the National Minimum Wage is £8.00 an hour for workers under 18, £10.85 an hour for workers aged 18 to 20. The National Living Wage for those aged 21 and over is £12.71 an hour.

Some retailers pay up to around £11.40 an hour.

Conditions

- You will work indoors.
- It is an active job and you might have to carry heavy items.
- You might have to work evenings and weekends.
- You may have to work longer hours near Christmas.
- Part time work is common.
- You would wear a staff uniform or smart clothes.
- You may get a discount on goods you buy from the shop.

Getting In

- You do not need formal qualifications, but a good general education is helpful.
- You should be fit enough to carry heavy loads.
- Apply directly to shops, from small newsagents to large department stores, from specialised boutiques to supermarkets.
- You may be able to get into a Modern Apprenticeships in retailing in some areas.
- Good keyboard skills or some computer knowledge may also be useful.

What Does It Take

You should be:

- fast and accurate with numbers for cash handling
- able to stay calm when the shop is busy
- polite and helpful
- good at working with people
- trustworthy and dependable
- smartly presented
- clearly spoken with good communication skills
- knowledgeable about the products the shop sells.

Training

- Your employer might arrange part time training for you.
- You can do an SVQ in Retail Skills at SCQF Levels 4 and 5 at college.

Getting On

- If you work for a large company, you might get training for a supervisory post.
- From there you could train as a manager, perhaps becoming a departmental manager and later moving into senior management. This may mean you have to move to another place for the best opportunities.
- You will not have as many promotion chances in a small shop but you can apply for jobs with larger organisations for more opportunities.

Contacts

British Retail Consortium (BRC)

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Website: www.brc.org.uk

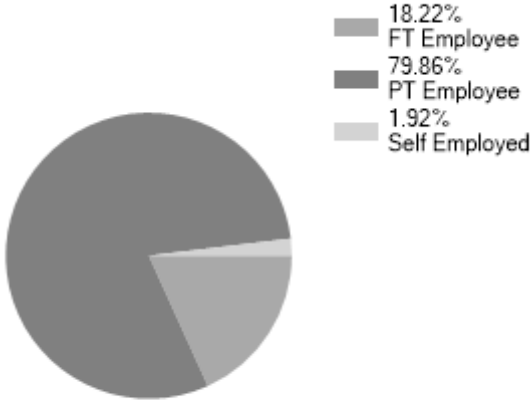
Website (2): www.rethinkretail.org.uk

X: @the_brc

Facebook: www.facebook.com/thebrc

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

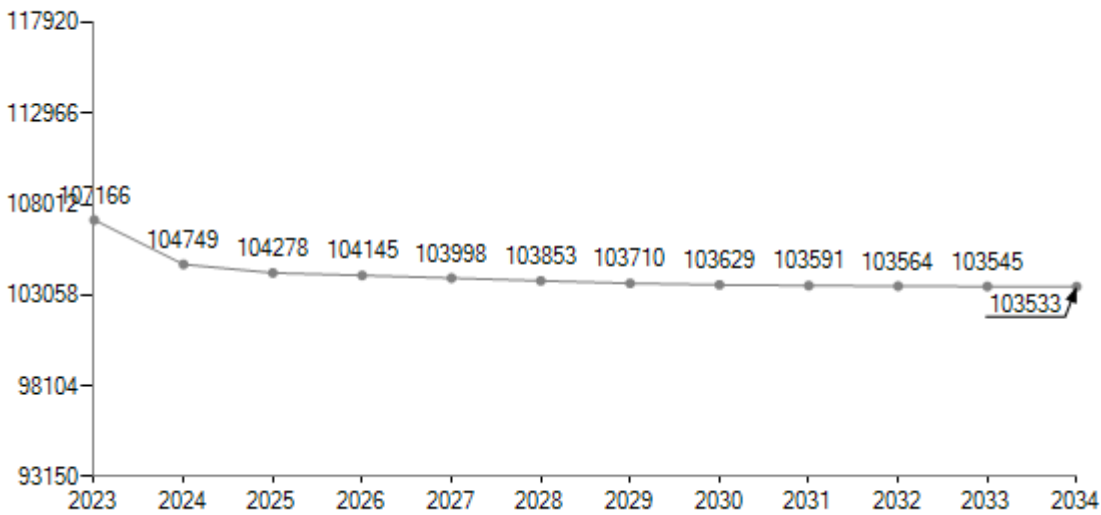


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)