General Construction Operative

A general construction operative, also called a labourer or ground worker, helps skilled craft workers in various jobs on building sites. See also **Plant Operator** job profile.

The Work

You could be:

- marking out the area for the site, using string lines wound between stakes
- putting up site huts, ladders, barriers and safety signs
- digging shallow holes and trenches, for placing building foundations and drains
- laying pipes, manhole covers and inspection chambers
- mixing and pouring concrete to make foundations, beams or floors
- using hand machinery: drills, pumps and compressors
- cleaning and maintaining tools and other equipment
- specialising in helping a particular skilled worker, for example a bricklayer, a glazier or a plasterer
- driving forklift trucks, dump trucks or other site machines.

Pay

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

- where you work
- the size of your company
- 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.

Conditions

- You work outdoors on rough muddy ground in all weathers. You might have to work at heights.
- You have to wear protective clothing: safety helmet, boots, overalls and high visibility jacket.
- Jobs are often temporary for a few weeks or months at a time.
- You have to travel to different sites.
- The working day starts early and may depend on the hours of daylight. You might work long hours in summer and shorter hours in winter.
- You often work overtime, including evenings and weekends to minimise the disruption to traffic.

Getting In

- A good general education is useful. You need basic reading and numeracy skills.

- You might enter through the Modern Apprenticeship in Construction: Civil Engineering leading to an SVQ at SCQF Level 5 or 6.
- You could study the Foundation Apprenticeship in Construction (SCQF Level 4 or 5) in S3-S6, which can help to get into a relevant Modern Apprenticeship.
- You must hold a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card or equivalent to work on a site. You must pass a health and safety test to qualify for this scheme.
- You may have to take an aptitude test before entry.
- A driving licence can be useful.
- There is no age restriction for entry, but if you have to operate machinery you must be over 18.

There are jobs with building contractors and with local authorities. Some large contractors now sub-contract the work to smaller firms.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- good practical skills
- a hard working attitude
- physical strength and a head for heights.

You need to be able to:

- follow strict health and safety regulations
- carry out written and spoken instructions
- work well as part of a team
- meet deadlines.

Training

- Training during an apprenticeship is mainly on the job with off the job training at college.
- If you are studying the Modern Apprenticeship in Construction: Civil Engineering you would work towards the SVQ in Civil Engineering at SCQF Level 5 or 6.
- You may do some specialist training, such as asbestos awareness or fork lift truck driving.

Getting On

- With experience, you can move on to a supervisory post.
- You might be able to move into site management.
- For a supervisory or management post you would need to study for an HNC (SCQF Level 7), HND (SCQF Level 8) or degree (SCQF Level 9/10) course in construction or built environment.
- Many experienced operatives become self-employed.
- You may want to move into a specialised role such as bricklayer or carpenter.

More Information

For more information please see organisation listed below:

Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)

Contacts

GoConstruct
Website: www.goconstruct.org
X: @GoConstructUK
Facebook: www.facebook.com/goconstructuk

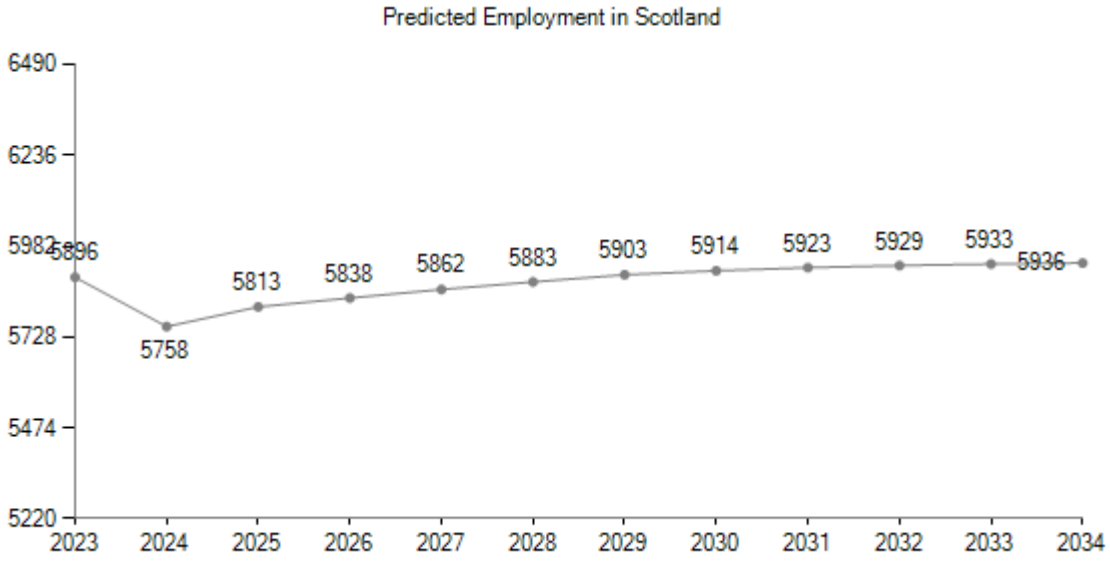
Statistics



Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by LMI for All



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