

Cabinet Maker

Cabinet makers make or repair items of furniture, either individually by hand, or on a large scale, using machines. They may specialise in, for example, restoring antique furniture or in assembling modern units, including kitchens, for the mass market. Mostly they use hardwoods such as oak, walnut or teak. Sometimes they incorporate other materials such as plastic, metal, glass, leather and fabric into their products.

The Work

You could be:

- either creating or obtaining a design to work from
- referring to this drawing to work out the size of the piece of furniture and the amount of wood you need
- choosing the wood and other materials such as chipboard, aluminium or plastics
- producing templates or prototypes for production
- cutting and shaping the wood using electric and hand tools such as saws and chisels
- fixing the pieces together by techniques such as dovetailing and jointing
- adding any decorative features such as staining, marbling, or marquetry
- smoothing the wood by hand or with a machine and finishing it with polish or lacquer
- adding handles and hinges.

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 of the job.

You may start as a Modern Apprentice. The apprentice rate, for those aged under 19 or aged 19 or over and in the first year of their apprenticeship, is £8.00 an hour (1 April 2026).

Qualified and experienced cabinet makers can earn from £25,000 to £35,000 a year or more.

Conditions

- You will work in a studio, workshop or factory.
- In a factory you will work around 40 hours a week, but you may have to work shifts and overtime. If you are self-employed you may have to work late to meet deadlines.
- You might have to travel to pick up wood or to deliver finished items to customers, and so a driving licence is often necessary.
- Factories and workshops are often noisy and dusty.
- Some materials used for finishing have a very strong smell.
- You may wear protective clothing including a face mask and ear protectors.
- The job involves bending and stretching.

- You may have to lift and carry heavy weights.

Getting In

There are several ways into this career.

- You may get direct entry to a job, perhaps through a training scheme such as a Modern Apprenticeship.
- You may do a full time college course in subjects such as furniture craftsmanship, furniture design and production or furniture restoration.
- You could do an NC/NQ (SCQF Levels 4-6), HNC (SCQF Level 7) or HND (SCQF Level 8). Entry requirements for NC courses range from no formal qualifications to 2-4 subjects at National 4 or 5. For an HNC or HND you need 1-2 Highers to get in.
- City of Glasgow College offer an HND in Furniture Craftsmanship.

This is a competitive field to get into.

What Does It Take

You should be:

- good at working with your hands
- good at judging colour and shape
- patient
- artistic and imaginative
- able to pay attention to detail
- accurate with figures and measurements
- able to understand and produce technical drawings.

Training

- Training may be on the job through the employer's training scheme. This usually leads to SVQs.
- There is an NPA in Furniture Making at SCQF Level 5.
- Membership of a professional body such as the [Guild of Master Craftsmen](#) can help you establish and build up a good reputation.

Getting On

With experience and qualifications, you may go on to:

- a management post with a company that makes furniture
- specialist work, such as craft cabinet making or antique furniture restoring
- furniture design
- teaching your craft in a college
- self-employment.

Contacts

Furniture Makers' Company

Tel: 020 7256 5558

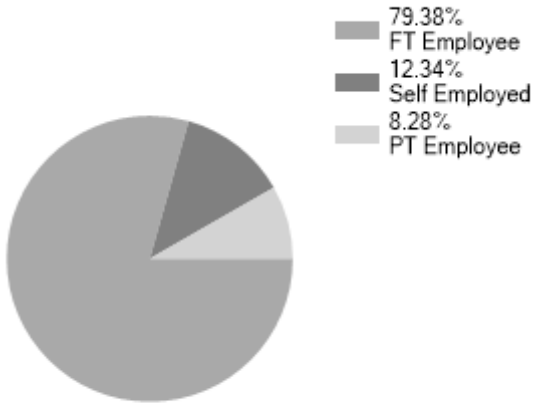
Email: hello@furnituremakers.org.uk

Website: www.furnituremakers.org.uk

Website (2): myfurniturecareer.org.uk

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

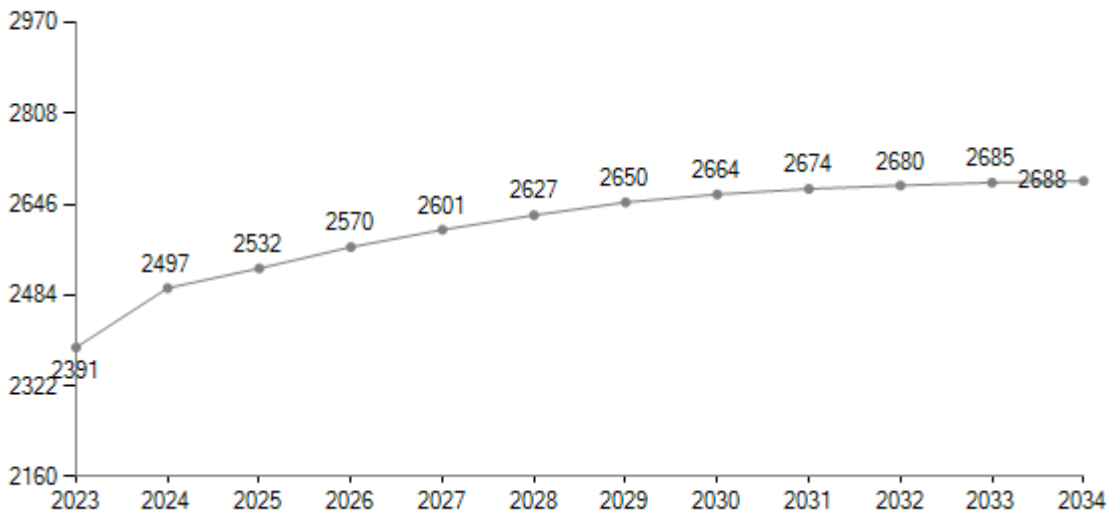


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)