

Dancer

Professional dancers tell stories or express emotions using rhythm and movement. They perform as part of a group, or sometimes solo, and usually specialise in one style of dance. They may dance in front of a live audience or in recorded performances.

The Work

Professional dancers work in a variety of styles which include:

- classical ballet
- contemporary dance such as jazz, street, hip-hop or freestyle
- musical theatre
- Highland dance or Scottish country dancing
- ballroom and Latin American
- cultural dance: Irish, Indian, African, Russian
- dance in education
- disability dance.

You could be:

- designing (improvising) or working out your own dance routine
- interpreting the work of a choreographer
- learning steps and moves quickly and repeating them accurately in performance
- practising for and attending auditions
- spending more of your time rehearsing and exercising than in performance
- performing in theatres, studios or clubs, for television or film production companies and sometimes in schools and community centres
- teaching individuals or groups, adults or children
- working for a group, in the chorus line or, very occasionally, as a soloist in a dance company or for a TV, film or theatre production
- using other skills, such as singing and acting.

Pay

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

- whether you are freelance or employed
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the competition for posts.

Equity (the performers' union) negotiates minimum wage rates for ballet and dance artists annually. You will find rates on the Equity website. They can vary depending on whether the work is for a rehearsal or performance, the style of dance and the medium (for example theatre or television).

UK Theatre website currently publishes recommended rates for Ballet dancers at a minimum of £450 per week. (UKTheatre/SOLT/Equity – Ballet Agreement Rates effective from 3 October 2022.)

Teachers of dance can charge freelance rates of between £15.00 to £30.00 per hour or between £80 to £160 a day.

Conditions

- Dancers spend most of their time rehearsing and practising, usually in rehearsal rooms, keeping up their skills and fitness levels.
- You must be very fit and careful to avoid injury, as this could affect your future career.
- You often work away from home, sometimes for long periods on tour.
- You will have a lot of evening and weekend work when most performances take place.

Getting In

- You do not need specific entry requirements to work as a professional dancer. However, most entrants have a relevant qualification in dance performance.
- An important part of the selection process, in all cases, is the audition. This assesses your performance ability and potential.
- There is sometimes also an interview and medical.
- There are courses in dance and performing arts (including dance) at NC or NQ level (SCQF Levels 4-6), as well as HNC (SCQF Level 7), HND (SCQF Level 8) and degree level (SCQF Levels 9/10). For NC/NQ courses entry requirements vary and you do not always need formal qualifications. For HND courses you need 2 Highers or a relevant NC/NQ plus an audition.
- A number of Scottish colleges offer qualifications in contemporary dance performance, dance, dance artists and professional dance performance.
- Dundee and Angus College offers the BA Dance (1 Year Completion Award) in conjunction with the University of West London, and Edinburgh College offers the BA Hons Dance and Drama in conjunction with Kingston University London. Entry is through a relevant HND.
- Scottish Ballet and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland have developed a degree course in Modern Ballet. You require 5 subjects at National 5 and also have to undergo an audition. You can enter from 16 years of age.
- Many private schools offer courses in different styles of dance. You should check that the Council for Dance Education and Training recognises the qualifications they award.

What Does It Take

You should have:

- creative talent and good expressive skills
- a good sense of rhythm and timing
- energy and stamina to stay in peak physical shape
- motivation and commitment
- discipline to stick to rigorous rehearsing schedules
- a good memory to remember many different and sometimes difficult moves

- team working skills
- flexibility to deal with changes to dance routines and cast.

You should also be:

- passionate about dance
- able to deal with rejection and criticism
- determined to succeed.

Training

- Most professional dancers start classes at a young age and move to more intensive training as teenagers. For classical ballet, serious training often starts even earlier.
- You must continue to train and keep up your skills throughout your career. Dance schools offer courses, summer schools and workshops.
- You might train in some additional skills, for example singing or acting.

Getting On

- In this highly competitive work, there is a lot of job insecurity.
- Most dancers will be unemployed at some time in their career, so it is useful to have other skills to do another job in-between dance contracts.
- Skills and experience in music and drama will improve your chances of success.
- You might move on to be a soloist or principal but these posts are limited.
- At the end of their professional dancing career some dancers become choreographers, (see [Choreographer](#)), arts administrators (see [Arts Administrator](#)) or teachers (see [Dance Teacher](#)).
- Some dance schools include teaching skills, and qualifications to teach privately, as part of the dance course.

More Information

YDance enable young people from across Scotland to access high-quality dance opportunities regardless of circumstances. Visit the [YDance website](#) for more information.

Contacts

British Ballet Organisation (BBO)

Tel: 020 8748 1241

Email: info@bbo.dance

Website: www.bbo.dance

X: @bbodance

Facebook: www.facebook.com/bbodance

British Theatre Dance Association (BTDA)

Tel: 0116 397 0866

Email: info@btda.org.uk

Website: www.btda.org.uk

X: @BTDA dance

Facebook: www.facebook.com/British-Theatre-Dance-Association-1501833233450091

Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre (CDMT)

Tel: 020 7240 5703

Email: info@cdmt.org.uk

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/CDMTuk

Creative Scotland

Email: enquiries@creativescotland.com

Website: www.creativescotland.com

Website (2): opportunities.creativescotland.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland

Equity

Tel: 020 7379 6000

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/EquityUK

One Dance UK

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/onedanceuk

Royal Academy of Dance (RAD)

Tel: 020 7326 8000

Email: info@rad.org.uk

Website: www.royalacademyofdance.org

X: @RADheadquarters

Facebook: www.facebook.com/RoyalAcademyofDance

Royal Ballet School

Tel: 020 7836 8899

Email: enquiries@royalballetschool.co.uk

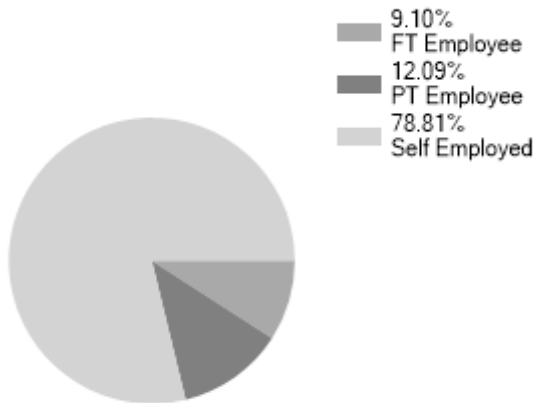
Website: www.royalballetschool.org.uk

X: @RoyalBalletSch

Facebook: www.facebook.com/royal.ballet.school

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

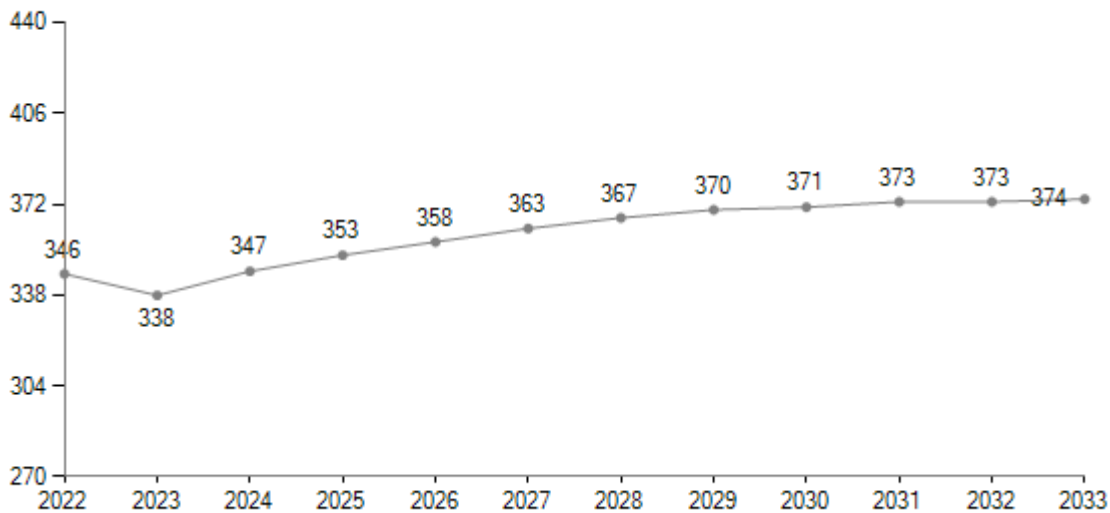


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)