

Actor

Actors use speech, movement and body language to play the part of a character or interpret a script for a theatre, film, TV or radio performance.

The Work

You could be:

- portraying characters created by a playwright, screenwriter or author, guided by a director
- doing background reading and research for your role
- using your own past experience as well as your training to interpret the writer's words and bring the character to life
- working as part of a team with the director and your fellow actors to achieve the best interpretation of the script
- spending a lot of your time learning lines and rehearsing
- performing for a live audience or recorded programme for TV, film, radio or theatre
- providing voice-overs for commercials, documentaries, audio books and animated or foreign language films
- continuously looking for your next job by preparing for and attending auditions and casting sessions
- adapting your performance to the differing technical demands of film, TV, radio and theatre work.

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 competition for the job.

Most actors are self-employed. Equity sets annual minimum rates for actors in both theatre and film, TV and radio. Rates vary depending on whether it is a rehearsal or performance and whether it is for film, TV, radio or theatre.

For example, the minimum weekly rate agreed between ITC (Independent Theatre Company Ltd) and Equity for a performance is £601.00. These rates are valid from 2025 to 2026. You can find details of all the current Equity rates under the 'Rates and Agreements' section of their website.

Actors working for a touring company may also get a lodgings allowance. You pay a reduced Equity subscription when you are not in work.

Conditions

Many people believe this is a glamorous and well-paid job. This may be the case for a few actors at the top of their

profession, but it is certainly not true of the majority and many have to do other jobs.

- The work is mainly indoors, in theatres or in studios, but can sometimes be outside, on location or in street theatre.
- In the theatre, or in a long running TV or radio series, you may perform the same role for weeks or months.
- You may have to wear uncomfortable costumes, heavy make-up and wigs for long periods.
- In film and TV, you may have to spend long periods between scenes waiting for lights, props and sets to be arranged.
- When working on a production, you often have to spend long periods away from home or abroad.
- You may have to work irregular and very long hours, from early morning to late at night.

Getting In

- Although there are no formal entry requirements, most actors have been to drama or stage school.
- There are courses at various levels: NC or NQ (SCQF Level 4-6), HNC (SCQF Level 7), HND (SCQF Level 8) and degree (SCQF Level 9-10) in subjects such as acting and performance, drama, performing arts, and theatre studies.
- Entry qualifications to these courses vary depending on level, from a few subjects at National 4 or 5 or equivalent, to 3 or more Highers. There is usually also an audition and an interview.
- It helps if you have some experience in amateur drama.
- You need to be a member of [Equity](#) for most jobs.
- Many actors sign up with an agent to help them find work. The agent takes a percentage of the job fee.

What Does It Take

You should have:

- talent
- confidence
- a clear speaking voice and the ability to learn different accents
- imagination and creativity
- stamina
- a good memory for learning lines quickly
- the ability to express a wide range of emotions
- the ability to be punctual and reliable
- good communication and listening skills.

You also need:

- the ability to carefully observe others, their accents, physical gestures and expressions
- adaptability to take on different roles and cope with the technical demands of different performance styles
- the ability to network with people in the industry and make contacts
- resilience, to take criticism and rejection.

Training

- Actors develop their skills on the job.
- You may need to learn skills like dancing or horse riding for a particular part or learn to perform fight scenes without harming yourself or others.
- You may choose to train in a related area, such as directing, scriptwriting or teaching.

Getting On

- Actors work in live shows, as in the theatre, or in recorded productions, such as television programmes or adverts.
- Film and TV tend to be better paid, but many actors find theatre more satisfying and rewarding.
- To be really successful you need not just talent but a lot of luck.
- Some actors do get regular well-paid work, but others need to supplement their income with other jobs.
- A 'character' role on a regular television or radio series can provide longer-term security.
- Some actors become directors and some go into teaching.

More Information

The Scottish Youth Theatre offers an exciting and varied programme of classes, projects and performances throughout the year and throughout Scotland for young people aged between 14-25. Visit the Scottish Youth Theatre website for more information.

Take a look at The Stage online magazine for information on jobs and auditions. You can even download a Jobs and Auditions app for your iPhone. The Mandy is also a job platform for the performing arts.

Contacts

Creative Scotland

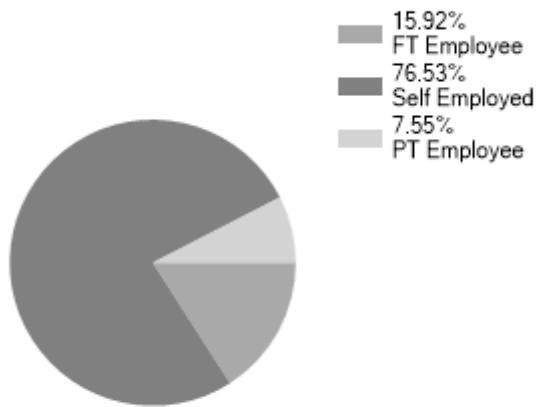
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Scottish Youth Theatre

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Statistics

Employment Status UK %

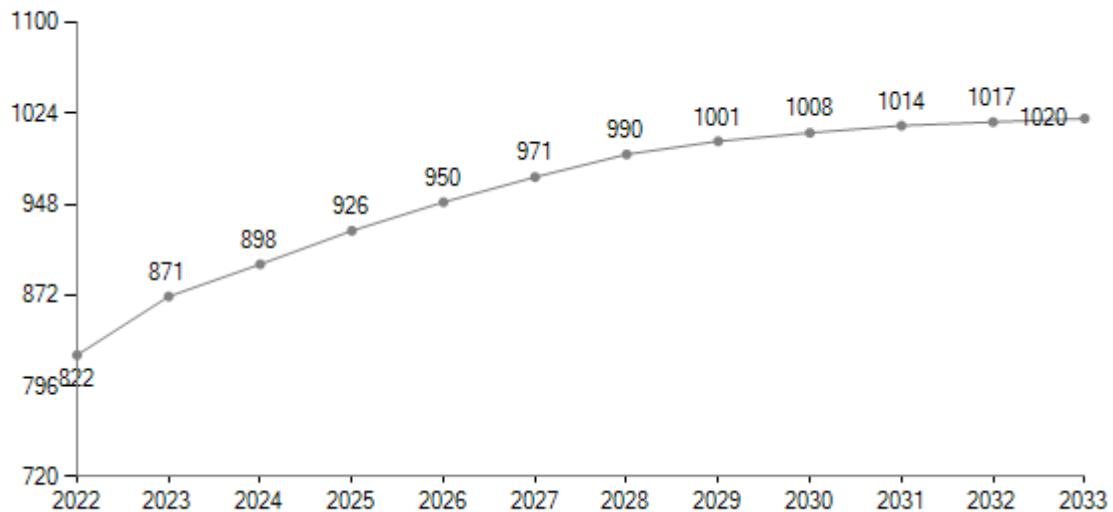


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)