

Sound Technician

Sound technicians set up, operate and maintain the technical equipment used to record, edit, amplify and enhance the sound produced for film, radio, TV or theatre. They can also be called sound engineers.

The Work

Work can be in sound production, which involves producing all sound by making recordings, or in post-production, which involves amplifying, balancing, mixing and monitoring sound. It may be in a studio, dealing with recordings, or in a venue hosting live productions.

You could be:

- liaising with producers and performers to work out the sound requirements
- choosing the best technical equipment according to the job
- creating sound effects by recording new ones or sourcing existing ones from sound libraries
- setting up, testing and adjusting recording equipment indoors or outdoors to suit the acoustics
- playing or recording speech, music or sound effects
- removing interference by dubbing
- using a mixing desk to control levels of speech and other sounds during productions
- monitoring audio signals to make sure sound quality is consistent
- servicing, maintaining and repairing sound equipment.

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.

The starting salary for sound technicians can be around £20,000 a year. With some experience this can rise up to around £25,000 and with long term experience and excellent technical skills earnings can be over £40,000 a year.

Many technicians are freelance and negotiate their fees on an individual basis. The Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU) website has guidelines to help you. Their suggested rates depend on the type of production you work on and the exact job you do. For example, a first assistant sound person can earn £400 for a 10-hour day on a TV drama production (Band 1), while a production sound mixer on a low budget film production can earn £520 for a 10-hour day (Rates as of 2024).

However sound engineers at the start of their career often work on a low pay/no pay basis, sharing in the profits (if any) of the event.

Conditions

- You will work in varied places depending on the type of work: television and radio studios, theatres and film sets.
- You will be both indoors and outside, in all kinds of weather, on location.
- You may work long and irregular hours to meet deadlines.
- You might have to travel to other areas of the country or the world.
- When you are collecting samples or editing, you will usually work alone.

Getting In

Most people enter by one of the following routes.

- Direct entry to a training scheme from school. This is very competitive and you need at least National 4 or 5 in English, Maths and Physics or a technological subject.
- More often, entrants have an NC (SCQF Levels 4-6), HNC (SCQF Level 7) or HND (SCQF Level 8), or degree (SCQF Level 9-10) in audio engineering, sound production, music technology, sound engineering or a related subject. Some entrants have qualifications in electronic engineering (particularly communication systems). Entry requirements vary depending on the level of the course.
- There are courses available at Glasgow Caledonian University that are accredited by JAMES (Joint Audio Media Education Support).
- Technical skills and relevant experience are as important as qualifications.
- Employers expect you to have experience in amateur or student productions. You need to have a portfolio of your recordings.
- In broadcasting companies, internal appointments are common. Getting a job as a runner (see the [Runner](#) job profile) can be a foot in the door.
- It is important to make contacts in the industry, so the ability to network is essential.
- You must be fit enough to set up sound equipment (rigging), which can involve lifting, bending and working at heights.

What Does It Take

You should have:

- an ear for music and sound
- familiarity with sound technology and electronics
- an accurate and methodical approach
- the ability to concentrate for long periods
- excellent attention to detail
- drive and stamina
- quick reactions, especially if working in live production
- the ability to work under pressure to meet deadlines
- good communication and teamworking skills.

Training

Employers provide on the job training.

Getting On

- Many sound technicians work freelance, often on short term contracts with broadcasting or production companies.
- Some build up their reputations and are much in demand.
- Permanent jobs are limited but you may be able to progress to senior sound technician or to sound supervisor.
- With enough experience you might move on to management roles in larger organisations.

More Information

Trainee Finder is ScreenSkills flagship new entrant programme which offers paid work placements across a range of roles in film and TV. Recruitment will usually begin around September of the year before placement. Find out more and apply online by visiting the [Film Trainee Finder website](#).

Contacts

4 Careers

Website: careers.channel4.com/4skills

X: @Channel4Skills

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Channel4Skills

BBC Recruitment

Website: careers.bbc.co.uk

X: @BBCGetIn

BECTU Scotland (Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union)

Tel: 0141 370 1590

Email: info@bectu.org.uk

Website: www.bectu.org.uk

Website (2): careersmart.org.uk

X: @bectu

Facebook: www.facebook.com/BECTUOfficial

ITV Careers

Website: careers.itv.com

X: @ITVCareers

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ITVCareers

JAMES (Joint Audio Media Education Support)

Website: www.jamesonline.org.uk

Radio Academy

Email: info@radioacademy.org

Website: www.radioacademy.org

X: @radioacademy

Facebook: www.facebook.com/radioacademy

ScreenSkills

Tel: 020 7713 9800

Email: info@screenskills.com

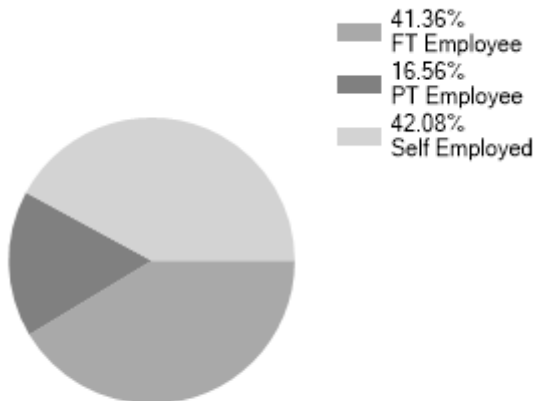
Website: www.screenskills.com

X: @UKScreenSkills

Facebook: www.facebook.com/UKScreenSkills

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

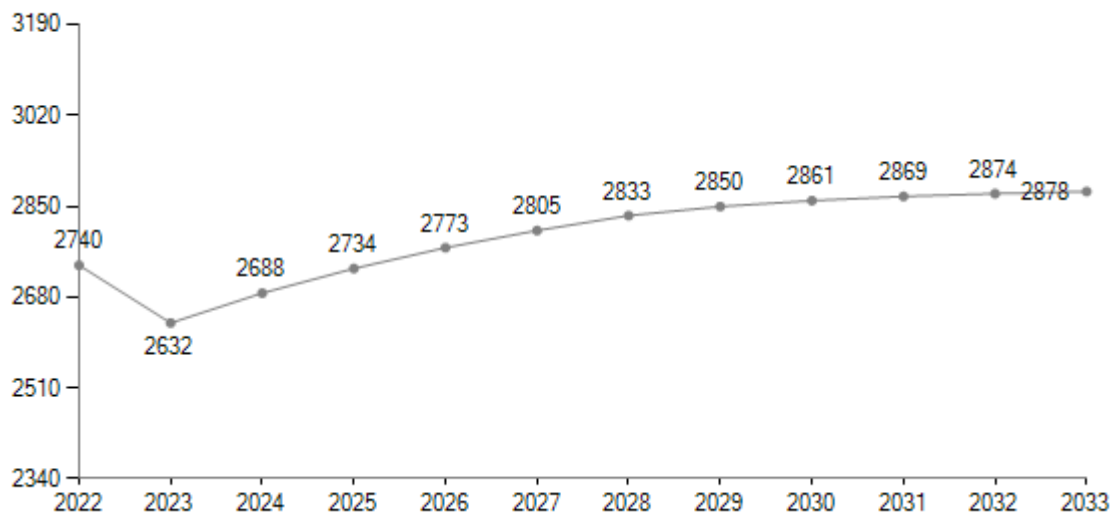


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)