

## Photographer

Photographers capture still or moving images using cameras. They take photos of people, places, products and events, according to what the client wants.

### The Work

Photographers usually specialise. You could be working in:

- **general photography** – mostly weddings, portraits or group photographs
- **press photography or photojournalism** – either freelance or on the staff of local or national newspapers
- **advertising and editorial** – for an agency, perhaps specialising in one subject like food or cars, or taking pictures for magazine articles
- **fashion** – clothes fashion, cosmetics and accessories, a very competitive field
- **scientific or medical** – recording experiments and research, or diseases and treatments
- **landscape or nature** – photographing wildlife, plants or scenery and emphasising both the scientific detail and the aesthetic appeal of the subject
- **commercial** – photos for company advertising, marketing and PR.

Your daily tasks could involve:

- discussing your client's needs (the brief)
- researching and choosing the best locations for a photo shoot
- setting up lighting, backgrounds and props and positioning the person or subject
- selecting the right camera, lens and accessories, using modern digital or traditional camera equipment
- improving or making changes to images by hand or by using specialist software, such as Photoshop
- checking the quality of the images before printing or providing in digital format to the client
- processing and printing photos, or arranging for this to be done
- liaising with other professionals such as graphic designers, editors, writers and printers
- bidding for freelance jobs or commissions.

### Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual salaries may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

As with other creative professions, salaries for photographers vary greatly. Starting salaries for qualified photographers in the UK tend to be in the range of £16,000 to £20,000 a year. More experienced photographers can earn up to around £35,000, sometimes more.

It is more common now for newspaper photographers to work freelance rather than being employed. The

National Union of Journalists (NUJ) website has a freelance fees guide.

Many photographers run their own business. They charge a fee, which varies depending on the work and their reputation. The better known they are, the more they can charge. Recent rates for event photographers have been between £110 and £250 per day or event.

## Conditions

- You would work in a studio or elsewhere on location, which could be indoors or outdoors.
- You would probably use a computer to develop and modify pictures, but if not, you would spend time in a darkroom.
- You might have to carry heavy equipment.
- You might sometimes use chemicals to develop films, although digital photography is increasingly making this method outdated.
- Hours can be long and irregular, often including weekend and evening work.
- Depending on your job, you may have to travel around the UK or abroad and be away from home overnight.
- If you work for the press you might find yourself in dangerous locations.
- If you work in medical or clinical photography or in forensic photography you would have to deal with upsetting subjects (see **job profile** [Clinical Photographer](#)). You might also have to work shifts.
- Many photographers work on a freelance basis and work may not always be steady.

## Getting In

- Entry is highly competitive.
- Most entrants take a full time course before applying for a job. You can take a NC/NQ (SCQF Level 4-6), HNC (SCQF Level 7), HND (SCQF Level 8) or degree (SCQF Level 9-10) in photography or in art and design with photography.
- To get into an NC or NQ course you might not need formal qualifications but some colleges require 2-4 subjects, including English, at National 4 or 5. For an HNC or HND you need a minimum of 1-2 Highers or NC or NQ, and for a degree, usually 4 Highers. Certain subjects may be specified for particular courses.
- Studying for a relevant Foundation Apprenticeship in S5 and S6, such as Creative and Digital Media, can provide work experience and may be accepted in place of a non-essential Higher for entry to a degree course. Entry requirements vary between colleges, but you usually require some subjects at National 5 including English and Maths.
- For art and design courses, you also need a good portfolio of work.
- Another route in would be to apply for a job and train on the job. You will need to show a strong interest in photography, ability in working with camera and film, and a portfolio of work. You may also need a group of subjects at National 4 or 5.

For art school courses, you need to apply through UCAS.

## What Does It Take

You need to be:

- artistic and creative, with a good eye for visual effect, colour and light
- competent with IT and using specialist software
- able to understand and interpret a client's brief
- punctual, reliable and well organised
- patient and determined – in order to get the right picture
- confident and self-motivated
- business minded, if self-employed
- able to get on well with people from different backgrounds
- willing to keep up to date with changing technology and methods.

## Training

The [British Institute of Professional Photography \(BIPP\)](#) offers professional qualifications at three levels, Licentiate, Associateship and Fellowship. You can get a guide to qualifying on the BIPP website with details of mentoring, portfolio clinics and assessment.

## Getting On

- You would probably start as a photographer's assistant or a trainee, working with an established photographer, with the local press, or in a hospital, research centre or office depending on your chosen specialism.
- You could move on to a more senior post in some fields.
- You might set up your own business. In this case it is useful to build up a network of contacts.

## More Information

There is no standard promotion. Photography is very competitive. To be successful, you must have the necessary skills, a good business sense and the ability to build up a reputation.

Young Scot and Creative Scotland operate the 'Nurturing Talent - Time to Shine Fund', which aims to support young people aged 11-25 and interested in developing creative or artistic skills. Both individuals and groups can apply for funding up to £1,000. For more information see the Young Scot website.

## Contacts

### Royal Photographic Society (RPS)

Tel: 0117 316 4450

Email: [learning@rps.org](mailto:learning@rps.org)

Website: [www.rps.org](http://www.rps.org)

Twitter: [@The\\_RPS](#)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/royalphotographicsociety](https://www.facebook.com/royalphotographicsociety)

### ScreenSkills

Tel: 020 7713 9800

Email: [info@screenskills.com](mailto:info@screenskills.com)

Website: [www.screenskills.com](http://www.screenskills.com)

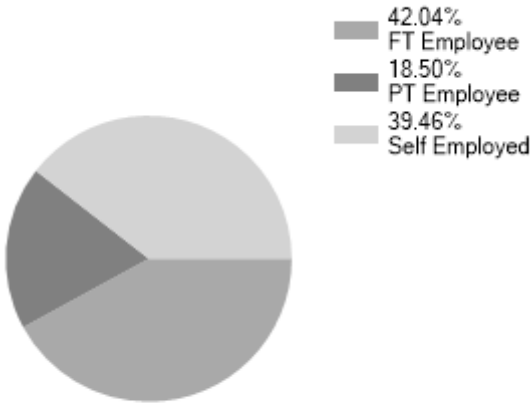
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Statistics

Employment Status UK %

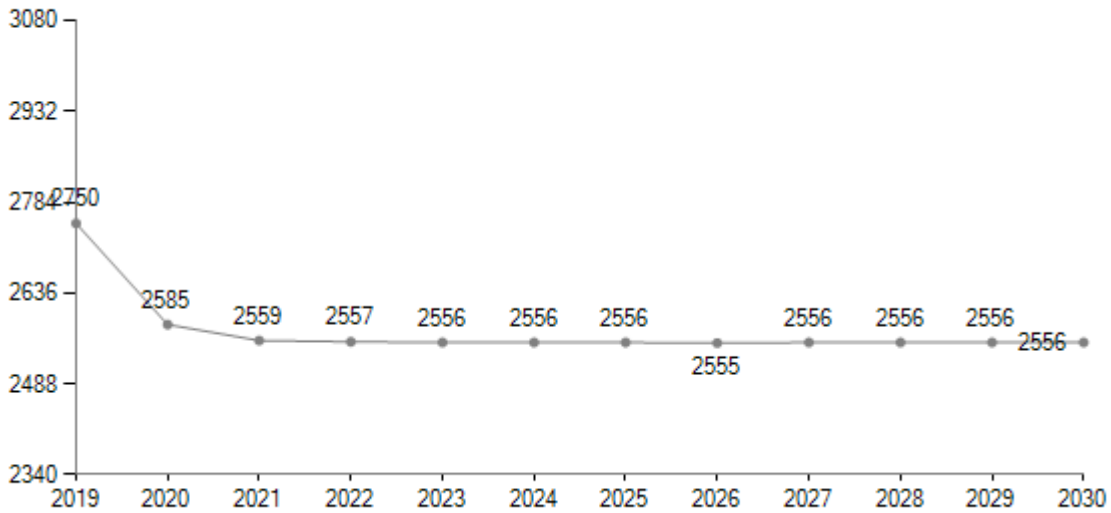


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [EMSI UK](#)