

Toolpusher

Toolpushers manage a team of workers on an oil rig or platform. They are second-in-command of the drilling crew, under the drilling superintendent, and are responsible for running drilling operations. Much of their work is administrative. Other terms used for this job include tour pusher and lead driller.

The Work

You could be:

- managing the day-to-day drilling operations, monitoring the work in progress and dealing with any problems that arise
- ensuring that all the necessary equipment, materials and resources are available
- selecting, hiring and managing workers on board the rig and ensuring they are properly trained
- planning the crew's shifts and rotas
- ensuring that health and safety regulations are met, including the wearing of protective clothing and the correct use of safety equipment
- coping with any emergencies
- liaising with representatives from the oil companies who visit and inspect the site
- conducting or ensuring that regular rig inspections are carried out
- assisting other team members, such as the driller and rig manager, with the effective running of the rig.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual salaries 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 toolpushers can range from about £45,000 to £55,000 a year. With experience they can earn £75,000 to £90,000 a year, sometimes more, especially when working in the Middle East. (In addition, employers provide accommodation and food, as well as warm and waterproof clothing.)

Conditions

- You would be based on an oil or gas rig and would sometimes have to work outdoors in conditions that can be very cold, wet, windy, noisy and dangerous.
- There are risks of injury from accidents, especially if working at heights.
- You would normally work offshore for 2 or 3 weeks, followed by a 2 or 3 weeks' rest period onshore. This will mean spending long periods away from your home and family.
- There is often no mobile phone signal, but there are pay phones and usually internet access.
- When offshore, you would work long shifts (normally 12 hours). You would sometimes be on call in case of emergencies.
- Employers provide free accommodation and meals and there are usually good recreational facilities. You

would usually share a cabin with a colleague.

- Alcohol is banned on rigs, and there is random alcohol and drug testing.
- When outdoors, you would wear protective and waterproof clothing. Employers provide all necessary safety equipment, such as thermal suits, gloves, boots and a hard hat.
- You have to fly by helicopter between the rig or platform and onshore.

Getting In

- The most common route into this job is by starting on an oil rig as a roustabout and gaining experience. You could be promoted through the jobs of roughneck, derrickhand and driller to the job of toolpusher or oil rig manager. This can take 6-10 years.
- You do not normally need formal qualifications to do this, but it is useful to have some subjects at National 4 or 5 to start with. You might gain SVQs (SCQF Levels 4-11) while you are working on the rig.
- Alternatively, you might be able to enter directly as an assistant driller with an HNC (SCQF Level 7), HND (SCQF Level 8) or degree (SCQF Level 9-10) in a relevant engineering subject. For entry to an HNC or HND you normally need 1-2 Highers; for entry to a degree, 4-5 Highers. You usually need Maths and at least one science or technological subject at National 5 or Higher.
- To work offshore, you must pass an offshore survival course such as the Basic Offshore Safety Induction and Training Certificate (BOSIET). Some people do the course at their own expense before looking for work. In other cases, some companies sponsor new employees through the course.
- You should be fit, as this job can involve climbing, lifting and using heavy equipment.
- You have to pass a medical examination every 2 years.

The UK oil and gas industry is located mainly off the east coast of Scotland and England. But there are also fields west of Shetland and in the Irish and North Seas. The employers in the industry include operating companies (usually oil companies) that hold exploration and production licences, drilling companies with contracts to do drilling work and a wide range of other major contractors and companies offering specialist technical services. There is a lot of competition for entry to this job. The main recruitment contacts in Scotland are in the Aberdeen area.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- good practical, mathematical and technical skills
- stamina, agility and a good head for heights
- good communication skills
- in depth knowledge of health and safety
- quick reactions to cope with emergencies
- excellent organisation skills
- problem solving skills.

You need to be able to:

- make decisions using sound judgement
- work outdoors in all weathers

- live on a rig or platform for periods of time
- live and work as a member of a team and independently
- work under pressure
- take responsibility
- manage and supervise staff at all levels.

Training

- Your training may start with a course leading to the offshore survival certificate, if you do not already hold this.
- Otherwise, you may begin with induction training ashore, covering information on the industry and the company, health and safety and skills training.
- Further on the job training then takes place offshore on the oil rig or platform.
- You may attend short specialist courses from time to time.
- You may take SVQs in management, possibly up to SCQF Level 9.
- You might complete well control qualifications approved by the [International Well Control Forum \(IWCF\)](http://International Well Control Forum (IWCF)).

Getting On

- With sufficient experience you may gain promotion to a more senior management post in the oil and gas industry, such as production supervisor.
- You might move into a management post in an onshore industrial or manufacturing company.
- Many of the large companies in the oil and gas industry operate throughout the world, so you may be able to work overseas.

Contacts

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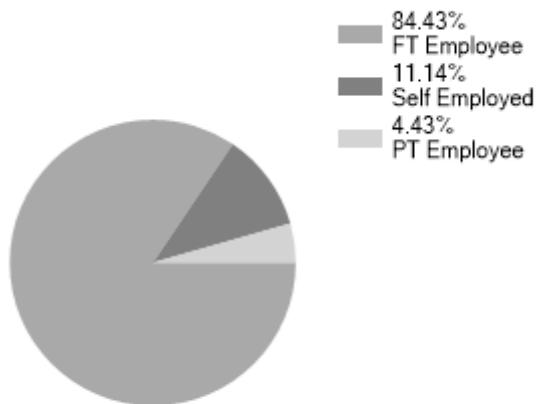
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Statistics

Employment Status UK %

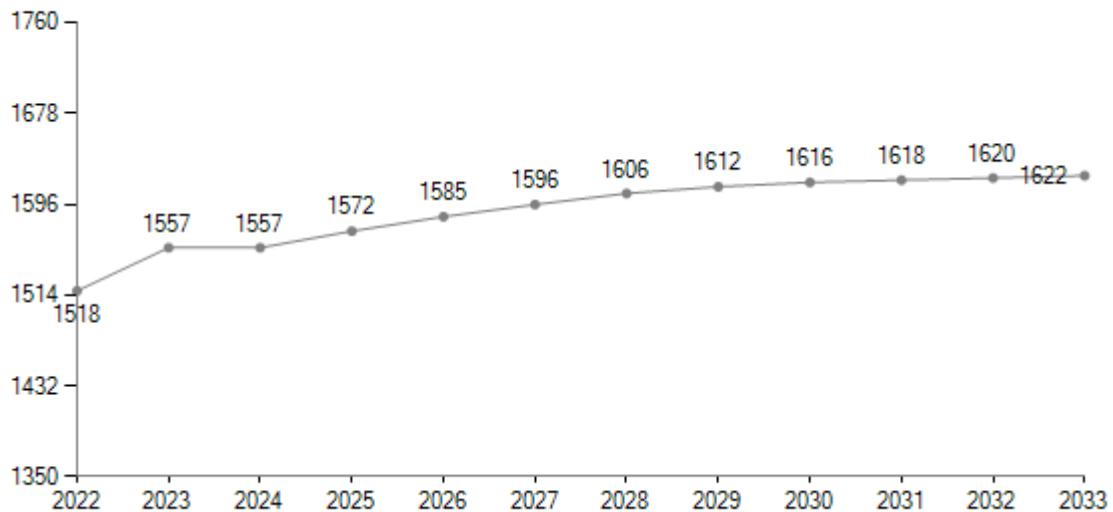


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)