

Diver

Divers carry out a range of tasks underwater, either inshore (such as rivers or lochs) or offshore (sea and ocean), depending on the type of diving and what industry they work in. This could include engineering, marine science, recreational or armed services.

In Scotland, most professional divers work offshore, primarily in the oil and gas industry.

The Work

There are four types of commercial diving:

- **SCUBA (Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus)** – divers wear air cylinders and can dive to a maximum of around 40 metres. This type is mainly used in recreational, media and police work
- **surface supplied** – divers' air supply is provided through a line or hose from the surface. This is used in inland or inshore diving, for depths of up to 50 metres
- **surface supplied top up** – divers use a hot water suit and wet bell to dive to 21 metres for longer periods of time (used in the offshore industry)
- **closed bell or saturation diving** – divers use mixed gas for their air supply and are submerged to depths of over 100 metres in a closed bell (also used in the offshore industry).

As a diver in the offshore oil and gas industry, you could be:

- diving up to a depth of 50 metres using wet bells (or 'open bells') and surface chambers
- 'saturation diving' (also called 'closed bell diving') to depths beyond 50 metres
- doing a range of underwater tasks on oil and gas installations, such as surveying, building and repairing
- carrying out non-destructive testing (NDT), for example inspecting concrete and metal joints visually, using video and still cameras
- identifying faults and weaknesses in oil and gas installations and doing repairs and general maintenance
- cutting concrete and steel
- welding – both wet and dry – involving manual metal arc welding and using underwater electrodes.

Divers work in various other fields as well as in the oil and gas industry. Their duties vary, in some cases, diving is only a small part of the job, in others, it is a major part.

- **Civil Engineering:** this often involves using hydraulic and pneumatic tools in projects such as harbours, bridges, oil rigs, offshore wind farms, canals and sewage out-falls.
- **Marine Science:** most of those involved in diving are scientists by training, such as biologists, chemists and geologists. Diving is only part of the work they do, which could include studying the distribution of sea-life, the effects of pollution, or the testing of equipment for use at sea.
- **Media Diving:** this could include carrying out underwater photography, video or filming for magazines, television or the cinema. Some divers are from a scientific background (see above); others are qualified photographers.
- **Nautical Archaeology:** this could include surveying sunken vessels and other submerged objects, to make sure that they are not a hazard to passing ships. Occasionally, divers might get involved in salvage work or

investigate sites of historic interest.

- **Police:** this could include underwater searching in lakes, rivers, canals and sewers for stolen property, murder weapons or human remains, or searching for explosives for security reasons.
- **Recreational Diving:** in this field, diving instructors work mostly in swimming pools or tourist resorts, teaching snorkelling and scuba diving, underwater navigation and safety and care of equipment.
- **Army:** divers from the Royal Engineers carry out underwater searches and underwater engineering work.
- **Royal Navy:** this could include searching for and dealing with unexploded bombs and mines, and inspecting and maintaining the hulls of ships. Ship's divers in the Fleet Air Arm could be involved in rescuing people from capsized vessels or crashed aircraft.

Pay

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

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

Divers salaries vary greatly depending on the type of work you do. Some divers are paid a daily rate.

Inshore divers carrying out unskilled work can earn around £100 to £120 a day. On average, they work around 180-200 days a year. However divers working regularly on offshore wind projects can earn up to £100,000 a year.

Offshore divers in Scotland can earn around £600 a day. On average, they work around 120-150 days a year.

Experienced saturation divers working offshore can earn £1,500 a day or more.

Police and Armed Forces divers salaries are in line with salaries for these organisations. See their websites for further details.

Conditions

- The work can be cold, difficult and dangerous.
- It can also be physically and mentally demanding – you have to be fit to cope with the physical and emotional demands on the body and there is limited contact with other people, sometimes only by a communication line.
- You may have to use specialised equipment in awkward conditions with very restricted vision under water.
- If working offshore, you would spend periods away from home, sometimes weeks at a time.
- In deep-sea diving, you would have to work from a diving bell which can be cramped, and then spend long periods in a decompression chamber, in communication only with life support technicians.
- You have to wear protective clothing and breathing apparatus.
- You are likely to work irregular hours, although the actual time you would spend underwater is strictly controlled.
- You are likely to work on contracts which can be short term and at short notice, and which often involve spending nights away from home.

- Likely locations include the North Sea, the Gulf of Mexico or the Indian Ocean.

Getting In

- Anyone wishing to dive professionally in Great Britain must gain a relevant qualification approved by the [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#).
- Many commercial divers first gain academic or technical qualifications relevant to their chosen industry. For example, they may first train in science, engineering, welding or photography. They would then attend a diving school.
- There are no set academic requirements for entry to diving training, but you must be physically and psychologically fit, and have good night vision. It can be useful to have experience of diving for recreation, but this is not essential.
- There are courses for those wishing to become commercial divers in diving schools in coastal centres in Scotland, leading to diving qualifications approved by the HSE. The particular qualification would depend on the type of diving work. A full list is available from the HSE. Most courses are private, have significant tuition fees and accommodation costs and last up to 13 weeks, depending on the type of course you take.
- Before starting any training, you have to pass a thorough medical examination by an [Approved Medical Examiner of Divers \(AMED\)](#). The certificate has to be renewed annually and includes a fitness test.
- To work offshore in the oil industry you must pass an offshore survival course such as the Basic Offshore Safety Induction and Emergency Training Certificate (BOSIET). Contact OPITO for details.
- Another area of diving showing a lot of growth is recreational instruction. However, entry is competitive, the amount of work available varies according to the time of year and pay may not be as high as in other types of diving.
- There is an upper age limit of 39 for entry to diving roles in the Royal Navy.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- excellent physical fitness, stamina and swimming skills
- relevant practical, technical or professional skills
- a methodical approach, with attention to detail
- good concentration to work in difficult conditions
- a strong sense of responsibility
- a willingness to work away from home for periods of time.

You need to be:

- highly safety conscious
- able to remain calm in an emergency
- resourceful, able to think quickly and use your initiative
- able to work alone and also as part of a team
- able to cope with working in isolated conditions.

Training

- Commercial divers train at an [HSE-approved centre](#) before taking up a diving career.
- Those in other professions, for example, scientists and archaeologists may also have to pay for their own diving school training. In some cases, however, their employers may sponsor them.
- The police and armed forces have their own training schemes. Police officers can apply for diver training after their initial two-year probation period is over. Royal Navy officers and ratings can train to be Direct Entry Divers or can apply for diver training from another specialisation.

Getting On

- Many professional divers are self-employed. Some contracts can be very short; others can be long term.
- After experience as an air diver you can train in closed bell diving and become a saturation diver.
- In some areas of employment you may get promotion to posts such as supervisor or underwater inspector.
- Some divers combine teaching and diving to become instructors.
- You may need to move around the country to find work. There may also be opportunities to work abroad, although some countries may demand different diving qualifications.

More Information

You can find out more information about diving at the [Scottish Sub-Aqua Club](#) website.

Contacts

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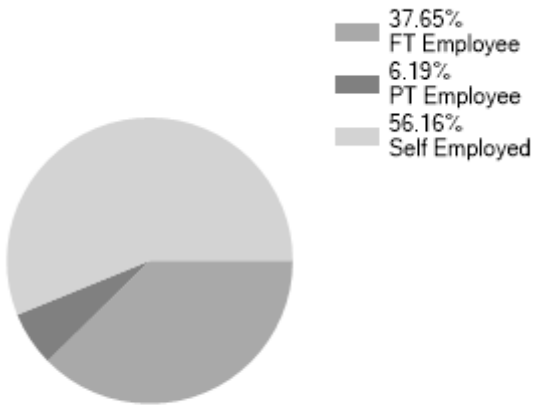
Website: www.sut.org

X: @SUT_news

Facebook: www.facebook.com/SUT.org

Statistics

Employment Status UK %



Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.