

Bookseller

Booksellers buy and sell books. Some specialise in selling second hand or antique books, or in particular subjects such as music, scientific or children's books.

The Work

You could be:

- meeting publishers and wholesalers to view catalogues, new books and to negotiate terms
- buying in new stock and checking existing stock levels
- working closely with local colleges and universities to make sure your stock meets student demands
- helping customers choose books, checking if and where they are in stock and placing orders
- stocking shelves and creating window and store displays
- repairing second hand books and deciding a price for them
- setting up and running stalls at book fairs
- running a direct order delivery service around places of work
- helping organise book promotional events such as book signings.

Pay

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

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

Starting pay is often based on the National Minimum Wage (NMW) or the National Living Wage (NLW).

As of 1 April 2026 the National Minimum Wage is £10.85 an hour for workers aged 18 to 20. The National Living Wage for those aged 21 and over is £12.71 an hour.

Supervisors and assistant managers usually earn from £16,000 to £22,000 a year. Senior managers and self-employed booksellers can earn £25,000 a year and above. If you are running a direct order delivery service, your income is commission-based and will therefore vary from week to week.

Conditions

- You will be in a bookshop most of the time, but might visit warehouses and book fairs.
- You normally work around 37 hours a week, probably in shifts including evenings and weekends.
- Part time work is common.

Getting In

- The most common way in is to contact the bookshop head office asking if there are vacancies.

- Most large employers have moved to online recruitment. Check company websites for more details.
- Entry requirements vary. Some employers will consider you with subjects at National 4 or 5, but more commonly are asking for a degree.
- In a larger store you will start out as a sales assistant.
- It helps if you have work experience in a bookshop, perhaps at weekends or during the holidays.
- Computer skills are usually essential.
- A driving licence may be useful.

What Does It Take

You should have:

- a wide reading of classical and current literature
- a passion for reading and talking about books
- good general knowledge
- good communication skills with different people
- commercial awareness and sales skills
- good organisational skills
- excellent customer service skills
- a polite manner and smart appearance.

Training

- Training is mostly on the job.
- Some big employers run their own training schemes.
- Some employers help their staff to take Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) in Retail Skills at SCQF Level 6 or Retail (Sales Professional) at SCQF Level 6.

Getting On

- Online bookselling is now more popular than the shop-based industry.
- You might gain promotion quite soon, but it can make little difference to your pay. You usually become manager of a section and then manager of a floor.
- You might become self-employed and concentrate on particular types of books such as second hand or specialist books.
- You could move into other areas such as publishing or marketing of books.

More Information

There has been a decline in this area of work due to the increase in online shopping and the use of e-book readers.

Contacts

Booksellers Association of the United Kingdom and Ireland
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British Retail Consortium (BRC)

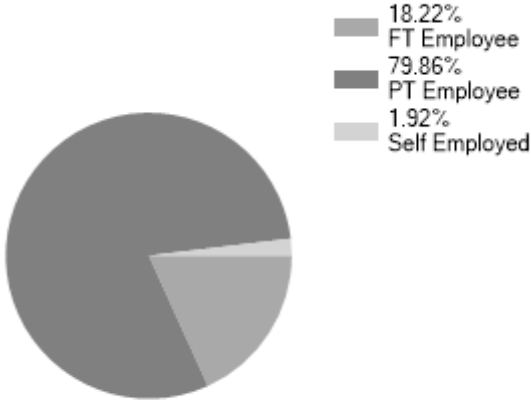
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Statistics

Employment Status UK %

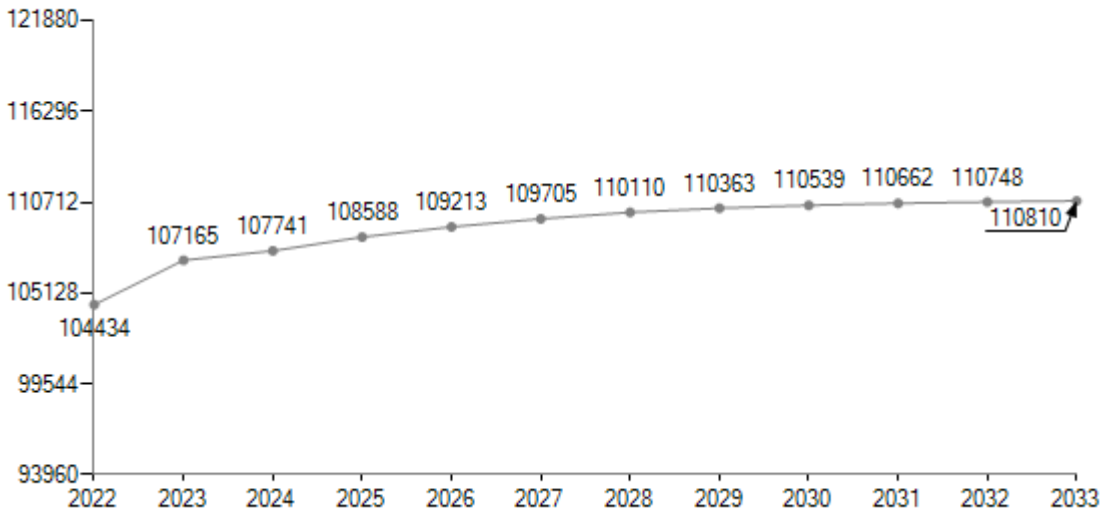


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)