

Musician - Popular

Popular musicians play or sing in bands or as soloists or session musicians. The styles of music they may perform include: pop, all forms of rock, country and western, easy listening, jazz, folk, blues and world music.

The Work

You could be:

- specialising in a particular type of music
- playing an instrument and possibly singing
- writing music for you and your band to perform and record
- performing your own music, or cover versions, before a live audience
- recording tracks in a studio or at home for release as a CD or digital download
- spending most of your time practising and rehearsing
- arranging gigs, tours and publicity or working with a manager who does this for you
- networking to make contacts and promote your act
- publicising your act by releasing recorded songs, making videos, doing interviews and performing live.

Pay

Income varies with skill, experience, and the amount of work you can get.

[The Musicians' Union website](#) shows recommended minimum pay rates (updated every year) for a range of musical performance types, including gigs and live engagements, recording and songwriting. For example, rates agreed with The British Recorded Music Industry (BPI) for example a single performance in a pub or club up to 3 hours is a minimum of £162.30. Up to 4 hours at a function would be £216.40.

Rates can depend on a number of factors including location, type of venue, type of performance (live or recorded) and even the time of day you play.

With any income you earn there may be expenses and fees to pay, such as a manager's fee, publicity and transport costs. You may share the income with other band members.

A few rock and pop musicians are seriously rich, but most have to take on a second job to make ends meet. You may be out of work much of the time. It is common for back-up acts or warm-up acts to perform unpaid or in return for expenses in the hope of establishing themselves.

Conditions

- You work long and unsocial hours, mostly evenings and weekends.
- You can spend hours recording, whether it is your own music or as a session or backing musician, sometimes in small studios.
- You rehearse and perform in pubs, clubs, concert halls, theatres, open air stadiums and at festivals.
- There can be a risk of damage to your hearing with some types of music.

- Minor physical injury from repetitive movements can occur, for example neck or shoulder problems from drumming.
- You may go on tour here or abroad, living for long periods in temporary accommodation. This could be a hotel, hostel or even your transport — it depends on how established and successful you are.
- On tour you live day and night in close quarters with the rest of the band.
- You are expected to have your own instruments and possibly other equipment, such as amplifiers.

Getting In

There are many different ways into this career. Talent, perseverance and skill in making contacts are more important than formal training, but some rock and pop musicians do have music qualifications.

- You can study for NC (SCQF Level 4-6), HNC and HND (SCQF Level 7 and 8) and degree (SCQF Level 9-10) courses in music, music performance and musical theatre.
- Entry requirements vary for NC, HNC and HND courses. Degree courses in Scotland usually require 3-4 Highers preferably including Music and Grade 7 or 8 on your main instrument from a body such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM).
- There is an interview and audition for most courses.
- Talent, perseverance and skill in making contacts are more important than formal training.
- You might get in as a session (casual, paid back-up) musician, particularly if you can read music fluently.
- Contact local venues — pubs, clubs and cafés — and the organisers of festivals such as TRNSMT, Celtic Connections and the Edinburgh Fringe to set up gigs.
- Bands advertise for members in recording studios, on the internet and in the music press.
- Visit recording studios with examples of your recent work, send demo CDs to music publishers and upload your work to music and social media sites to gain exposure.
- Enter auditions for organised talent competitions in your local area or on radio or television.
- Get as much experience as you can as an amateur before you start earning.
- Join the Musicians' Union, to make contacts and to protect you against being exploited.

Most jobs are in cities, but there are also opportunities in holiday resorts and on cruise ships.

What Does It Take

You need:

- musical ability and talent
- a willingness to practise and work long hours
- determination to succeed
- confidence
- energy and stamina
- self-discipline
- networking skills
- business and negotiating skills.

You need to be:

- creative
- willing to adapt to different musical styles
- able to cope with criticism and rejection
- able to get along with others for long periods.

Training

- Most bands develop their skills together, training on the job.
- There is a dedicated rock and pop exam board — Rockscool Ltd. They have developed a range of qualifications in guitar, drums, vocals, bass, piano/keyboard and band exams. There are exam centres in Scotland in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Getting On

- Success comes from selling more CDs and digital downloads, becoming well known through the internet or from moving into bands which are already more successful.
- Later you could move into producing and writing music for other artists or into the business side of popular music — music promotion or music management, or find work with a record or music publishing company.
- Many rock and pop music careers are short lived, so plan an alternative career to take up later.

More Information

If you join a performing rights collection agency, such as Broadcast Music Inc. (BMI), or Performing Rights Society (PRS), the collection group will keep track of public performances of your material, collect payment, and pass the royalties on to you.

Contacts

Independent Society of Musicians (ISM)

Tel: 020 7221 3499

Email: membership@ism.org

Website: www.ism.org

X: @ISM_music

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ISMusicians

Rockscool Ltd

Tel: 0345 460 4747

Email: info@rslawards.com

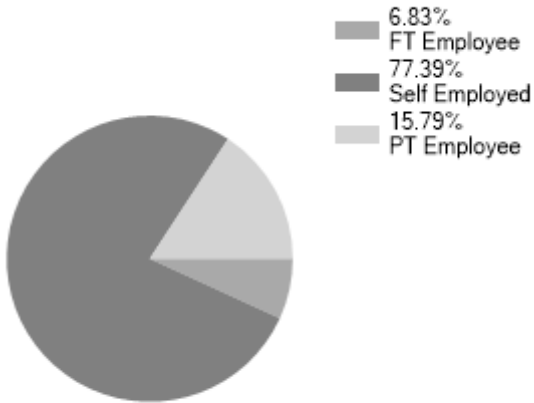
Website: www.rslawards.com

X: @RSLAwards

Facebook: www.facebook.com/rslawards

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

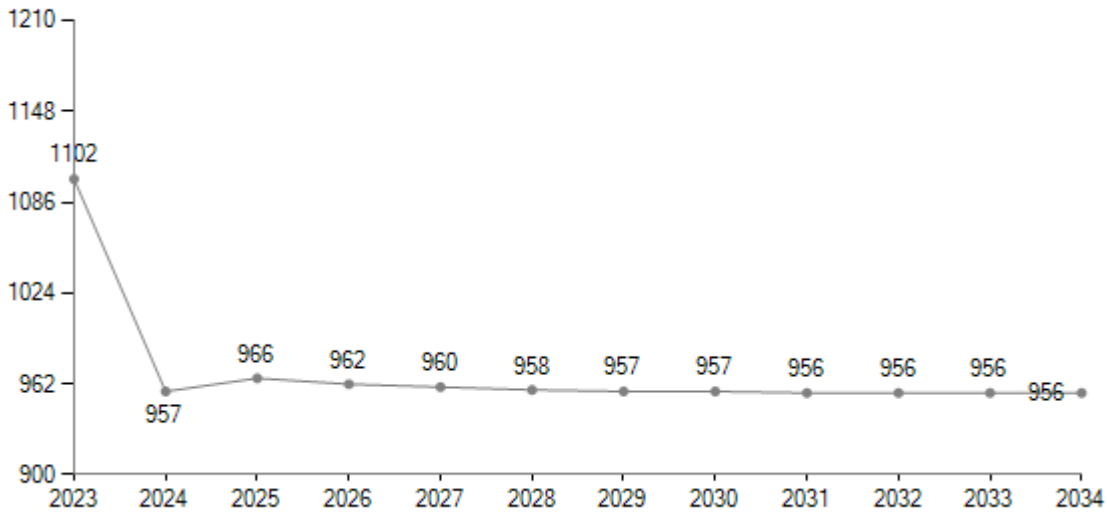


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)