Distillery Worker

A distillery worker carries out various tasks involved in the production process of a variety of spirits, such as malting, mashing and packaging. Depending on the size of the distillery, the different stages can be automated or done by hand.

The Work

There are many different spirits that are produced in a distillery, but the processes referred to below are for whisky production.

You could be:

- monitoring the malting, mashing, fermentation and distillation processes, under direction from the technical distiller
- measuring, weighing and mixing ingredients
- checking machinery to ensure that it is running smoothly and reporting any problems
- carrying out basic maintenance on machinery
- keeping all production areas and units, including mash tuns, stills and wash backs, clean and sterilised
- working in the warehouse moving raw materials and full or empty casks, storing and positioning them correctly
- bottling, labelling and packaging spirits, sometimes boxing bottles manually
- ensuring that quality control standards and targets for production are met
- keeping records for stock production and raw material usage.

Pay

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

- where you work
- the size of the 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 2025 the National Minimum Wage is £10.00 an hour for workers aged 18 to 20. The National Living Wage for those aged 21 and over is £12.21 an hour. With experience and more responsibility this could rise up to around £15-£20 an hour.

Conditions

- Certain areas of the distillery will be hot and there are fumes from the liquid produced at various stages.
- In the warehouse it may be cold and damp.
- You would probably wear protective clothing such as overalls, ear protectors and possibly a mask.
- You will probably work shifts, including evenings and weekends.

- There will be a lot of bending, stretching and lifting, sometimes of heavy items.

Getting In

- Some subjects at National 5, including English and Maths may be preferred by employers.
- You can get in through a Modern Apprenticeship in Spirits Operations at SCQF Level 6.
- For some jobs a driving licence may be required.
- You must be reasonably fit.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- good practical skills
- good attention to detail
- accuracy and precision for measuring and weighing
- an understanding of health, safety and food hygiene procedures
- good teamworking skills
- good communication skills
- a willingness to work flexibly.

Training

- Employers would provide on the job training specific to their production processes and regulations.
- You might complete some of the qualifications offered by the Institute of Brewing and Distilling (IBD), such as the introductory course Foundations of Distilling, the General Certificate in Distilling or the General Certificate in Packaging Spirits.
- If your employer is a member of the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) you might do a Spirits Industry Vocational Qualification (SIVQ).
- The SIVQ consists of a number of units covering a number of activities such as distilling and bottling, and is equivalent to SCQF Level 5.

Getting On

- After some years of experience you may go on to complete the Diploma in Distilling offered by the IBD.
- With experience you may move into a supervisory position and manage a team.

Contacts

Chartered Institute of Brewing and Distilling
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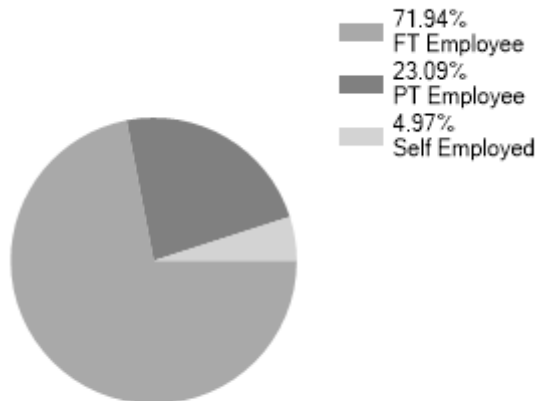X: @scotchwhiskyswa

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Statistics

Employment Status UK %

■ 71.94%
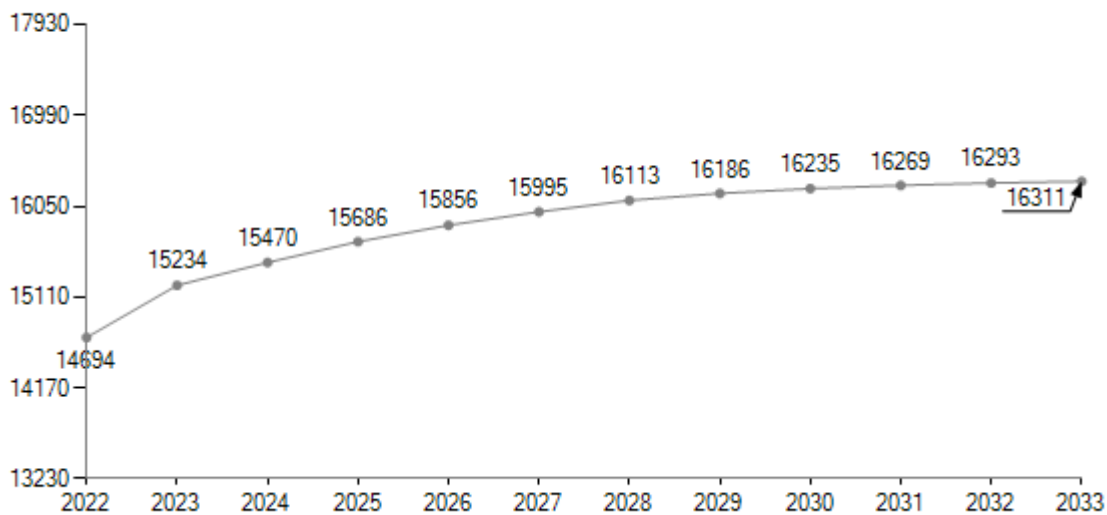FT Employee
■ 23.09%
PT Employee
□ 4.97%
Self Employed

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