Drone Pilot

Drone pilots remotely operate Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), otherwise known as drones. Drones are small or medium-sized aircraft that have no human pilot, crew or passengers. A pilot operates the drone remotely using a handheld controller. Drones are being used more and more including in surveying, search and rescue, filmmaking and aerial photography.

The Work

You could be:

- effectively and safely piloting a drone from the ground using a handheld console
- working in a control room using a computer to control a drone
- taking aerial photographs
- part of a film crew filming overhead shots for a film or TV production
- searching for a missing person or animal in remote areas
- surveying properties that may be too dangerous to enter
- working in traffic management, getting a bird's eye view of traffic problems on busy roads
- working on a farm herding sheep or other livestock.

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 a licensed drone pilot may be around £21,000 to £23,000 a year. With experience this may rise to around £30,000 a year. Senior drone pilots may earn up to £40,000 a year.

Conditions

- You could be working on location on a film or television set, on a construction site, out in the countryside or in a control room.
- You may have to work outdoors in all weather conditions.
- You may have to spend time working away from home.
- You may have to work unsocial hours including weekend and evening work.

Getting In

- There are no specific entry requirements, and each industry will have their own set of requirements. To fly a drone commercially in the UK you must first pass a few tests to meet Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) requirements and get operational authority. You must:

- o take the Drone Code Test to obtain your Flyer and Operator ID for drone operations
- o take a General Visual Line of Sight Certificate (GVC) course, which covers the theory and practical aspects of drone piloting
- o pass a 60-question multiple choice online theory exam (with a pass of 75% or more)
- o pass a practical flight test to demonstrate your skills and competency as a drone pilot
- o create an Operations Manual and submit to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).
- As well as the GVC, you can also complete the A2 Certificate of Competency (A2 CofC) – remote competency certificate for the safe operation of small drones near the public. This covers commercial and non-commercial. You will learn the fundamentals of flying a drone including navigating a busy airspace, battery safety and the environmental factors to be considered.
- Some companies will offer a combined training course allowing you to earn both licenses at the same time.

What Does It Take

You must have:

- good concentration skills
- the ability to stay calm under pressure
- excellent co-ordination skills
- excellent communication and listening skills.

You should be:

- able to pay attention to detail
- able to use your own initiative
- competent using a computer and software packages
- knowledgeable about safety protocols and airspace regulations and flight restrictions.

Training

- Training will depend on the industry you work in.
- You would require a Permission for Commercial Operations (PfCO) certificate, which must be updated every year.
- For some industries you would require further training and tests.

Getting On

- You may work up to supervisory then leadership roles.
- You could go freelance and build up your own client base.
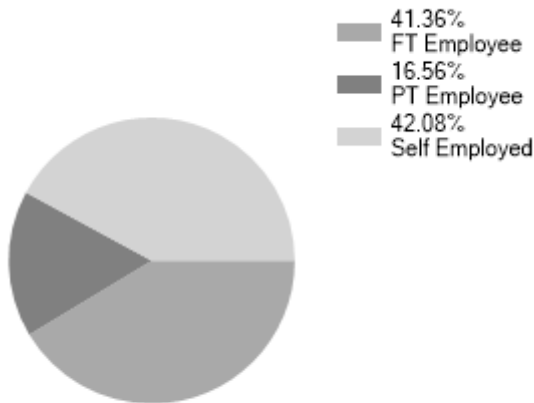- You may go into designing and building drones.

Contacts

Civil Aviation Authority
Website: www.caa.co.uk
X: @UK_CAA

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

- 41.36% FT Employee
- 16.56% PT Employee
- 42.08% Self Employed

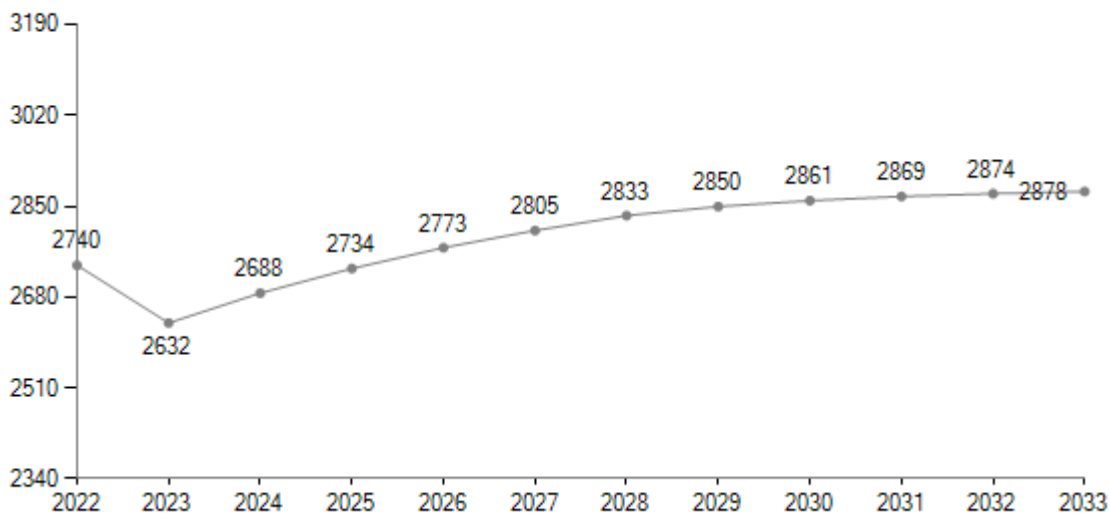**Past Unemployment - Scotland**

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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Predicted Employment in Scotland

2022: 2740
2023: 2632
2024: 2688
2025: 2734
2026: 2773
2027: 2805
2028: 2833
2029: 2850
2030: 2861
2031: 2869
2032: 2874
2033: 2878

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