

Translator

Translators change the written word from one language into one or more other languages. They can work on a range of projects, such as scientific, technical or legal texts, or choose to specialise in one area of expertise. Most translators work in their native language, translating other languages into English.

The Work

You could be:

- translating commercial, legal, scientific or technical materials, such as business letters, legal documents, computer manuals, brochures and advertising materials
- translating non-fiction books, such as educational, scientific and technical textbooks
- translating fiction works, such as novels, short stories, plays and film scripts
- using specialist translation memory software to assist with accuracy and efficiency
- making sure the translated text conveys the correct meaning for the target audience
- adapting the written style to suit the subject
- checking and editing translations others have done
- dealing with experts of specialist subjects
- specialising in one or more of the areas of work mentioned above.

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 translators working in the UK full time is around £20,000 - £25,000 per year. With experience this could rise to £40,000 a year or more.

Freelance translators are normally paid per thousand words (daily output normally ranges from about 2,000 to 3,000 words). Rates are generally between £50 and £150 per thousand, but can be between £100 and £300 for more unusual languages, difficult text or translators with a particularly good reputation.

Although work can be irregular, many translators enjoy the flexibility and variety that freelance work can bring.

Conditions

- Some translators work in the offices of the companies or organisations that employ them.
- Many others work from home on a freelance, self-employed basis, translating scripts sent to them by specialist agencies or by publishers with whom they have established contacts.
- In either case, you work long or irregular hours.
- You frequently work under pressure to meet tight deadlines.

- Most translators work alone. Those working freelance communicate with their agency or publisher by email, post, or telephone.

Getting In

- You must be fluent in one foreign language - preferably two.
- You must have an excellent grasp of grammar in your native language.
- Demand is steadiest for more widely spoken languages. Pay might be higher for less commonly spoken languages.
- Almost all translators have a degree (SCQF Level 9-10), usually in either interpreting and translating or one or more foreign languages, or in a foreign language combined with another subject. You normally need 4-5 good Highers for entry. You do not always need a Higher in each language, as long as you can demonstrate good language ability.
- Heriot-Watt University offers MA Honours degrees in Modern Languages (Interpreting and Translating) and Applied Modern Languages and Translating. The University of Aberdeen offers the MA Modern Languages and Translation and Interpreting Studies.
- Many translators also have a postgraduate qualification (SCQF Level 11) in translating or the Chartered Institute of Linguists' Diploma in Translation (DipTrans). Several universities in the UK offer relevant postgraduate courses, including Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Heriot-Watt and Strathclyde Universities.
- It is an advantage if you have knowledge of an area such as law, business, computer studies or engineering.
- If your degree is not in languages, you may be able to become a translator if, perhaps, you have been brought up to be bilingual (fluent in two languages) or have lived abroad. In this case, your degree should be in a specialist subject area.

Most full time posts are with government departments, international companies or with the European Union (EU) organisations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the United Nations (UN). There is also work with publishers, interpreting agencies, import/export companies and other international organisations.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- patience and persistence
- excellent keyboard and IT skills
- tact and discretion when working with confidential documents
- good working knowledge of the particular specialist field you are working in
- an impartial and objective approach
- good research skills.

You need to be:

- able to understand complex information
- able to work under pressure
- able to write clearly and accurately
- attentive to detail

- self-reliant and able to work on your own initiative
- well organised
- able to meet deadlines.

Training

- The Chartered Institute of Linguists (CioL) and the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) both provide short courses and weekend workshops for updating skills and professional development.
- You may also want to work towards the Diploma in Translation (DipTrans) offered by the CioL.
- If you have suitable experience and pass the relevant exam or assessment, you can become a member of the ITI or CioL, which may help to further your career.

Getting On

- There are limited full time opportunities for translators and there is a lot of competition for posts. Most full time posts are in large organisations with a well organised career structure and promotion opportunities to senior posts.
- There can be a small number of opportunities in publishing companies for experienced and specialist translators to work on language dictionaries and related publications. In larger companies you may be able to progress to a post of senior translator or move into management.
- Many companies prefer to deal with a translation agency which co-ordinates the work of freelance translators.
- You will need to keep up to date with technology developments and current terminology in the languages you deal with.
- Income from freelance work can be uncertain, so you might need to take on other part time work such as teaching or private tutoring.

More Information

The Association for Language Learning website has information on careers with languages, '[Why Study Languages?](#)'.

Check the Institute of Translating and Interpreting bulletin for job vacancies for translators (available online).

The [United Nations](#) careers website also has useful information.

Contacts

Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI)

Tel: 01908 325250

Email: info@iti.org.uk

Website: www.iti.org.uk

SCILT, Scotland's National Centre for Languages

Tel: 0141 444 8163

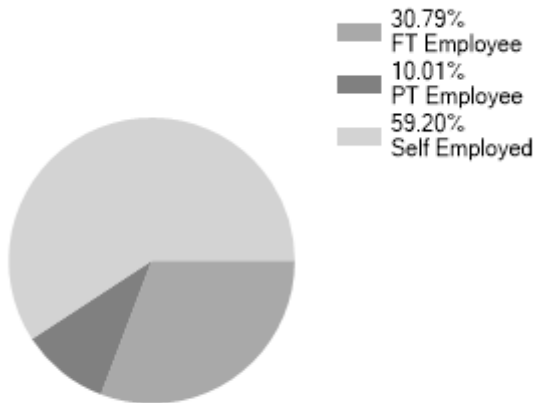
Email: scilt@strath.ac.uk

Website: scilt.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/sciltscotland

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

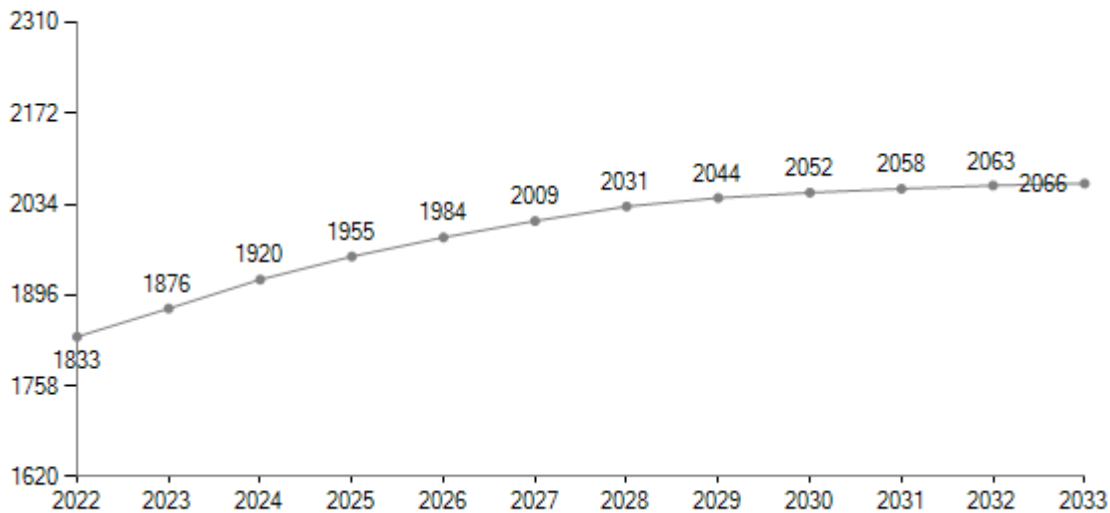


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)