

Sectoral Skills Assessment

Tourism

October 2025



Sectoral Skills Assessments

First launched in 2017, Sectoral Skills Assessments (SSAs) provide a robust and consistent evidence base to support strategic skills investment planning. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) has worked with key partners and stakeholders to produce SSAs, ensuring an inclusive approach to their development, dissemination and utilisation.

SSAs include published data sets. Inevitably, when using published data there is a time lag, but the data contained is the most up-to-date available at the time of writing. SSAs also include forecast data commissioned through Oxford Economics.

The Technical Note¹ provides full detail on the caveats that must be applied when using forecast data, but broadly, it should be noted that:

- Forecasts are based on what we know now and include past and present trends projected into the future.
- The more disaggregated they become, especially at smaller geographical units, the less reliable they are likely to be.
- Their value is in identifying likely directions of travel rather than predicting exact figures.
- The forecasts do not account for national or sectoral activities, initiatives or investments that are planned.

Industries and occupations used in the SSAs are defined by Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC)² and Standard Occupational Classifications (SOC).³

This SSA report is for the Tourism sector. The sector encompasses Hotels and Similar Accommodations, Camping Grounds, Restaurants and Beverage Activities, Tour Operator Activities, Museum Activities and Other Visitor Attractions, Garden and Nature Reserve Activities, and Amusement Parks and Recreation Activities. Please see Appendix 1 for the SIC definition used in this report.

The SSAs are part of a suite of Labour Market Insight publications by SDS. Other products in the suite include:



Economy, People and Skills report which provides succinct and up-to-date evidence on Scotland's economy, businesses and people. It is published monthly.



Regional Skills Assessments provide a coherent, consistent evidence base to inform future investment in skills, built up from existing datasets and forecasts for College regions, Rural Scotland and all City and Growth Deals regions. These are published annually.



The **Data Matrix** is an interactive tool, offering more detailed data from a variety of sources in a visually engaging format. It is updated frequently.

Alongside the suite of Labour Market Insight publications, SDS also produces a wide range of reports such as statistics on Modern Apprenticeships and the Annual Participation measure for 16-19 year olds. This includes a wide range of data related to equalities. Further information can be found on the [Publications and Statistics](#) section of the SDS website.



We value user feedback on the Sectoral Skills Assessments.

If you would like to provide feedback, please do so [here](#).

For any further information or queries on the SSAs or any of our other products, please contact: RSA@sds.co.uk

1. SSA Technical Note (2025).

2. Office for National Statistics UK Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) 2007.

3. Office for National Statistics UK Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 2010.

The Context for Scotland's Labour Market

Over the past decade, the Scottish economy has experienced disruption driven by changes in the global political landscape, the cost-of-living crisis and conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine. In addition, megatrends in demography, technology, and the environment have continued to shape Scotland's economy and labour market, many of which are interdependent. Below is an overview of the drivers that are expected to have the greatest influence on Scotland's labour market outlook in the near term, based on a comprehensive analysis of both structural and cyclical factors.

The Economy

Scotland and the UK experienced weak economic growth of 1.1% in 2024, with inflation also staying above the 2.0% target. Forecasters expect economic growth to remain at around 1.0% in 2025, with inflation also expected to remain elevated. The effects of rising prices and high interest rates continue to impact Scottish households and businesses. This contributes to the Scottish labour market being cooler in 2025, following a period of sustained tightness in recent years.



Demographic Change

Scotland's population is projected to grow until mid-2047, largely driven by positive net migration, which will offset the anticipated natural decline due to a falling fertility rate. However, whilst the population is growing, it is also ageing. Around one-fifth of Scotland's residents were aged 65 or over in 2024. By 2047, the number of people of pensionable age is expected to increase by 21%. This demographic change has implications for the economy and labour market, by affecting caring responsibilities, tax revenue, and productivity.



Inclusion and Equality

There is a lingering effect from the cost-of-living crisis, which began in 2021, with rising energy prices and financial pressures continuing to have a disproportionate impact on low-to-middle income households. Poverty, including in-work poverty, persists; however, the Fair Work policy agenda aims to reduce labour market inequalities. Barriers to accessing the labour market remain for disabled people and minority ethnic groups, and gender equality still requires progress.



Technology and Automation

Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to be the core driver in technology transformation. Scotland has a strong technology sector, underpinned by extensive academic and business presence in AI and related fields. The adoption of AI is rapidly increasing among Scottish businesses, particularly in optimising workflows. However, the implications of AI for the labour market remain uncertain. Scotland's strong base in digital and data skills could provide an advantage, but maintaining a skilled workforce will be essential.



Climate Change and Net Zero

The transition to net zero will directly impact the labour market as actions are taken to meet net zero targets. This shift offers significant opportunities for job creation in Scotland, particularly in the clean energy sector. Scotland has strong natural assets, and existing sectoral strengths provide a strong foundation for a green economy. However, upskilling will be crucial for transition to net zero. Especially in the construction, manufacturing, agriculture, energy and transport sectors.



A fuller report on Scotland's Labour Market Drivers can be found [here](#).

Strategic Landscape

The Tourism and Hospitality Industry Leadership Group (ILG) is responsible for the implementation of the national tourism strategy, Scotland Outlook 2030. This inclines a focus on attracting and retaining a talented and diverse workforce who are proud to work for Scotland, reforming the education and training of the workforce and influencing policy which impacts on the workforce.

The ILG and the Tourism and Hospitality Skills Group have developed a skills and workforce toolkit for businesses and staff within the sector.

Current and future workforce challenges

Rising Employer National Insurance contributions and wage increases have led businesses to reduce hours, cut back on learning and development, and scale back operations. There has been a drop in the number of apprenticeships within the sector, which will impact the development of the future workforce.

Skills in demand

Key skills currently in demand within the sector include:

- Communication, customer service, and people skills;

- Passion, work ethic, motivation, and flexibility;
- Digital marketing and media skills;
- Chef skills; and
- Management, leadership, and supervisory skills.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

There is an increased focus within the sector on recruiting and retaining a more diverse workforce, targeting older workers, people with disabilities, ex-offenders and ethnic minority groups who do not always consider the sector as a viable career option.

Fair Work

There is an increased emphasis on promoting, embedding and sharing good fair work practices across the sector following the Fair Work Convention Inquiry recommendations into hospitality.

Industry Skills Initiatives

A number of industry specific skills programmes are delivered by organisations including Springboard, HIT Scotland, UK Hospitality and People 1st International.

It is important to note that the forecasts used in this Sectoral Skills Assessment are policy and investment neutral.



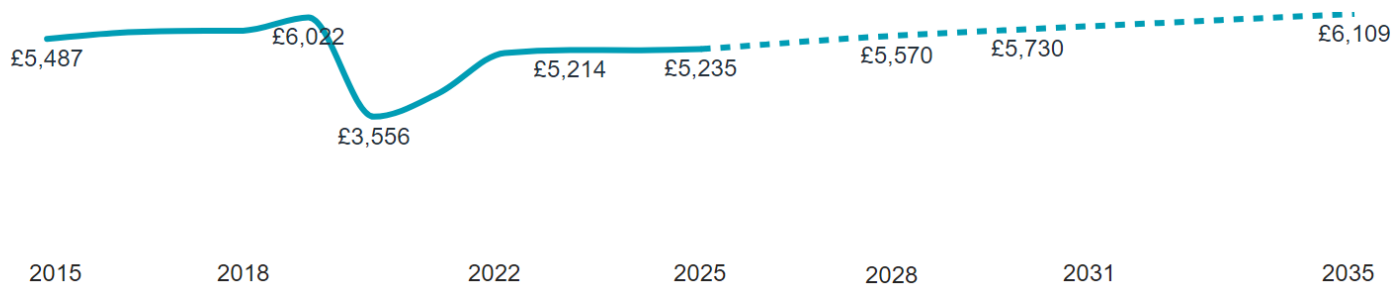
This means the figures present a baseline outlook that takes into account historical trends and external economic conditions, but the figures do not reflect investment or policy that is unconfirmed or at planning/development stage.

This would include, for example, CentreParcs investment in the South of Scotland creating up to 1,200 jobs.

Therefore, the forecasts should be used in conjunction with other sources, and readers are encouraged to overlay these with their own local and sectoral knowledge.

The Economy

Gross Value Added (GVA, £m) (2015-2035)^{1, 2}



In 2025, GVA in the Tourism sector was estimated to be £5,235m, generating 3.1% of Scotland's total economic output. Between 2015 and 2025, GVA in the sector was estimated to have increased by 1.1% on average each year, compared to equivalent annual growth of 0.9% across Scotland.

Looking ahead, GVA in Tourism is forecast to grow on average by 1.6% each year between 2025 and 2035, which is slightly below Scotland's average (1.7%). In 2035, the Tourism sector is forecast to remain accountable for 3.1% of Scotland's total economic output.



Tourism forecast GVA in 2028:
£5,570m

↑ up 6.4% from 2025

Scotland forecast GVA in 2028:
£177,951m

↑ up 5.2% from 2025

Tourism forecast GVA in 2035:
£6,109m

↑ up 9.7% from 2028

Scotland forecast GVA in 2035:
£199,512m

↑ up 12.1% from 2028

Productivity (GVA per job)^{1, 3}

In this report, we have used Oxford Economics' measure of productivity, which is calculated by dividing total sectoral GVA by total sectoral employment (measured by jobs). Please note, there are different ways of calculating productivity, and caution is needed when interpreting productivity data presented in this report. It must be considered in the context of other data and insight.

In 2025, productivity in the **Tourism** sector was estimated to be **£19,000**. In comparison, the Scottish average was £57,700.





Tourism forecast productivity in 2028:
£19,500

↑ up 2.4% from 2025

Scotland forecast productivity in 2028:
£59,100

↑ up 2.4% from 2025



Tourism forecast productivity in 2035:
£20,500

↑ up 5.1% from 2028

Scotland forecast productivity in 2035:
£63,600

↑ up 7.5% from 2028

1. SDS (2025). Oxford Economics Forecasts.
2. GVA is the measure of the value of goods and services produced within the economy and is an indicator of the sector's health.

3. Productivity is the measure of goods and services produced per unit of labour input. The Oxford Economics forecasts of productivity shown here have been calculated by dividing total sector GVA by total sector

employment (measured by jobs).

Current Demand



Workforce size 2025: **200,700** people¹

This was estimated to account for **7.4%** of Scottish employment.

The sector's workforce was estimated to have **increased** by **7.9%** (or **14,800** people) between 2015 and 2025.

This compares to a Scotland wide increase of **5.5%** or **141,500** people between 2015 and 2025.

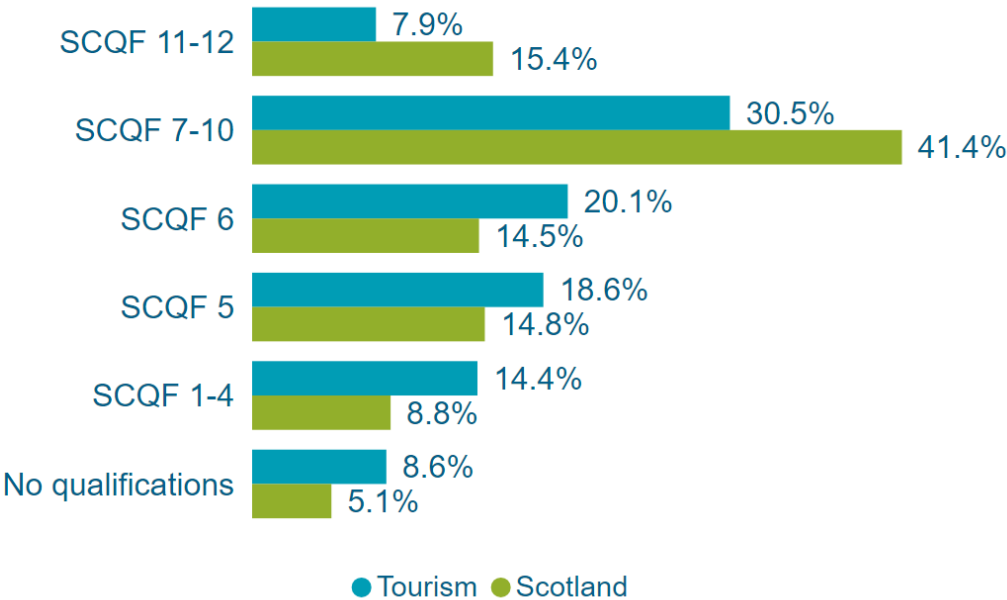
Employment by Region (people), 2025¹

The greatest number of people employed in **Tourism** were estimated to be in:

Edinburgh, East and Midlothian	Glasgow College Region *	Highlands and Islands	Aberdeen City and Shire
39,700	32,600	24,200	16,700

Workforce Qualifications, 2025¹

It was estimated that **Tourism** had a lower proportion of the workforce educated to SCQF Level 7 and above, and a higher proportion educated to SCQF Levels 6 and below compared to Scotland.²



Top 10 Employing Occupations (people), 2025¹



1. SDS (2025). Oxford Economics Forecasts.
2. See [SCQF Framework](#) for further information on SCQF qualification levels.

*Glasgow College Region covers East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire and Glasgow City local authorities.

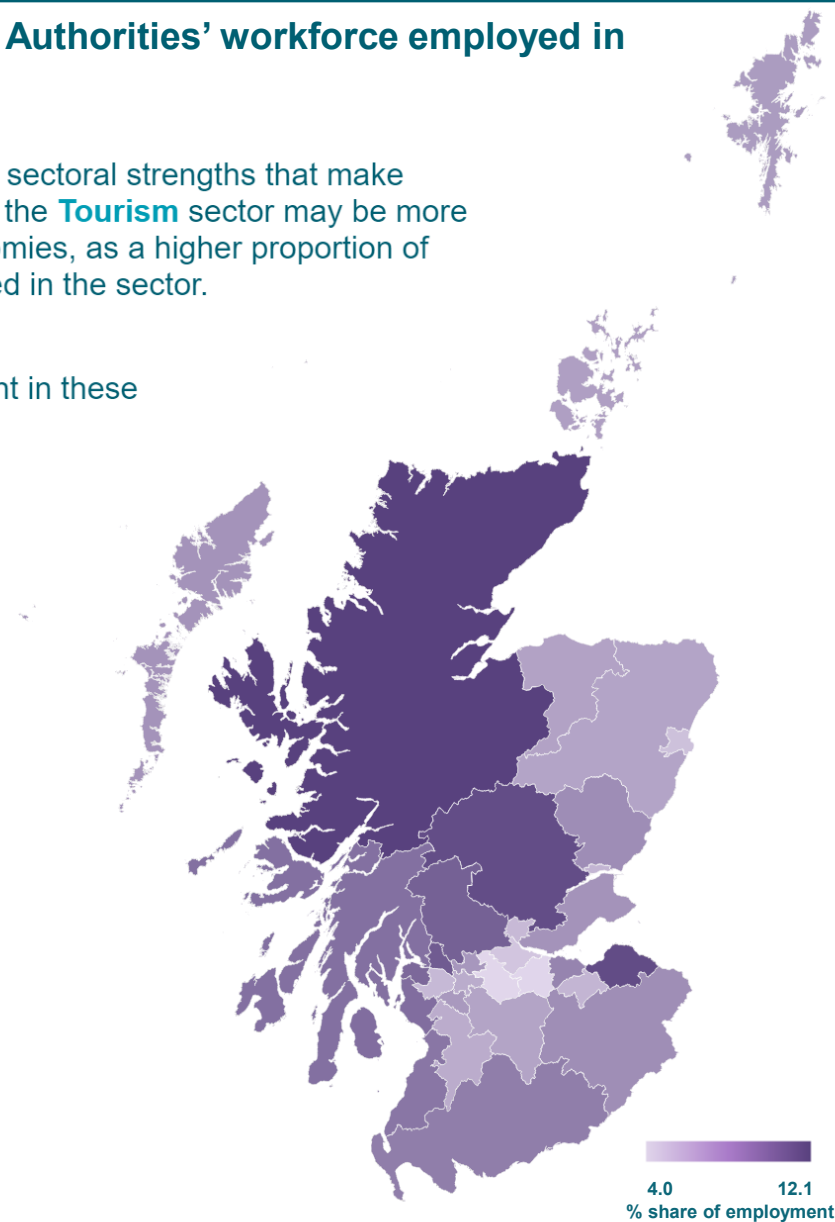
Current Demand

The proportion of Local Authorities' workforce employed in Tourism, 2025^{1, 2}

Scottish local authorities have sectoral strengths that make them unique. This means that the **Tourism** sector may be more important to some local economies, as a higher proportion of the local workforce is employed in the sector.

The sector was most prominent in these local authorities:

- Highland
12.1%
- East Lothian
11.5%
- Perth and Kinross
11.5%
- West Dunbartonshire
10.7%



Real Living Wage and Gender Pay Gap³

Individuals earning Real Living Wage or more:
In April 2024, the real living wage rate for employees who did not work in London was £12.00.

	Accommodation and Food Service Activities	2023: 56.6%	2024: 53.6%	
	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	2023: 85.1%	2024: 81.2%	All sectors
				2023: 89.8% 2024: 88.6%

Gender Pay Gap for median full-time hourly earnings:

	Accommodation and Food Service Activities	2023: 4.7%	2024: 1.5%	
	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	2023: 6.2%	2024: 6.8%	Scotland
				2023: 1.4% 2024: 2.2%

Due to data availability, a 'best fit SIC code approach' has been used, so sectors definitions here may not fully match key sector definitions.

Modern Apprenticeships⁴

	MA starts for Hospitality & Tourism*:		
	Q4 2023/24: 1,319	Q4 2024/25: 1,047	
	MAs in training for Hospitality & Tourism*:		
	Q4 2023/24: 1,013	Q4 2024/25: 775	

For the latest quarterly MA statistics, please click [here](#).

* Based on SDS Occupational Groupings.
For data on FAs and GAs please see the Publications section of our [website](#). For data on colleges and universities please see [Scottish Funding Council](#) and [Higher Education Statistics Agency](#).

1. SDS (2025). Oxford Economics Forecasts.

2. The proportion of the workforce in the Local Authority employed in the sector is calculated by dividing the sectoral employment in the area by total employment in the area.

3. Scottish Government (2025). Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings: 2024. The figures for 2023 have been revised. Due to data availability, a 'best fit SIC code approach' has been used, so the sectoral definitions and totals in this section may vary from those we have used elsewhere.

4. SDS (2025). Modern Apprenticeship Statistics.

Job Postings^{1,2}



Between July 2024 and June 2025, there were **505,170** job postings in Scotland across all sectors. The labour market across the country has cooled following a peak in job postings in 2022, and since the end of 2023 the number of jobs postings each month has been broadly stable.



Spotlight on... Chefs and Cooks³

Between July 2024 and June 2025, there were **8,710 job postings**. The number of job postings has increased by **4.1%** compared to the period between July 2023 and June 2024 (**8.0%** decline across all occupations comparatively).

Top Locations between July 2024 and June 2025:

-  **Edinburgh City**
1,800 job postings
-  **Glasgow City**
1,300 job postings
-  **Highland**
800 job postings
-  **Fife**
500 job postings

Specialised skills and knowledge requested (July 2024 and June 2025) included:

- Food Safety and Sanitation
- Cooking and Food Preparation



Median real-time advertised salary:
£27,100



Spotlight on... Tour Guides⁴

Between July 2024 and June 2025, there were **130 job postings**. The number of job postings has increased by **6.6%** compared to the period between July 2023 and June 2024 (**8.0%** decline across all occupations comparatively).

Top Locations between July 2024 and June 2025:

-  **Edinburgh City**
60 job postings
-  **Glasgow City**
20 job postings
-  **Highland**
20 job postings
-  **Moray**
10 job postings

Specialised skills and knowledge requested (July 2024 and June 2025) included:

- Communication and Customer Service
- Languages (English, Spanish, German, Italian)



Median real-time advertised salary:
£31,100



Spotlight on... Waiters and Waitresses⁵

Between July 2024 and June 2025, there were **4,050 job postings**. The number of job postings has decreased by **1.2%** compared to the period between July 2023 and June 2024 (**8.0%** decline across all occupations comparatively). However, demand for these roles remained steady.

Top Locations between July 2024 and June 2025:

-  **Edinburgh City**
1,200 job postings
-  **Glasgow City**
800 job postings
-  **Highland**
300 job postings
-  **Fife**
200 job postings

Specialised skills and knowledge requested (July 2024 and June 2025) included:

- Restaurant Operation
- Food Safety and Sanitation



Median real-time advertised salary:
£24,900

1. Lightcast 2025. Online job postings data provides a useful barometer for the health of the jobs market. It is important to note that the data does not capture all activity, so it should be considered as an estimate of activity.
2. Job postings are rounded to the nearest 10 or 100.

3. Data is based on SOC 5434 and 5435 for the whole of Scotland. Median salary based on 36% of job postings.
4. Data is based on job titles for the whole of Scotland. Median salary based on 58% of job postings.

5. Data is based on SOC 9264 for the whole of Scotland. Median salary based on 51% of job postings.

Spotlight: Digital Practitioners in Tourism

Digital Practitioners in Scotland



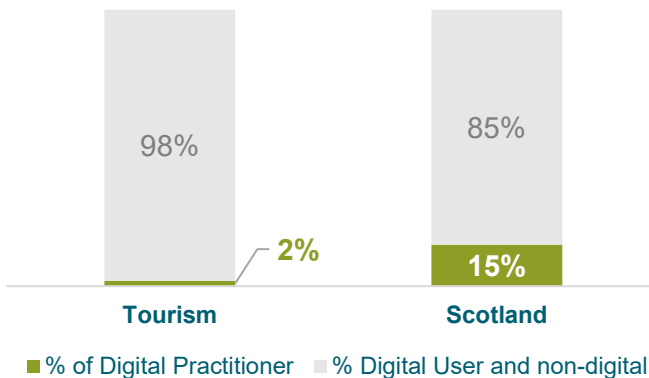
Recognising that digital skills permeate roles across all sectors and are no longer confined to traditional technology roles, SDS has undertaken research to define Scotland’s Digital Economy in 2025, building on the [Digital Economy Skills Action Plan](#).

This definition strengthens the evidence base and ensures SDS and partners can understand the spread of digital jobs across Scotland’s key sectors and identify how digital transformation is shaping skills demand, productivity and sectoral growth. More information on this research is available in Appendix 2.

This spotlight focuses on the presence of **Digital Practitioner** roles within the Tourism sector. Digital Practitioners are occupations that utilise technical and professional digital skills, either within the traditional digital sector or integrated into other roles outside the sector. These Digital Practitioner roles include occupations like **Marketing Associate Professionals** and **IT Managers**.

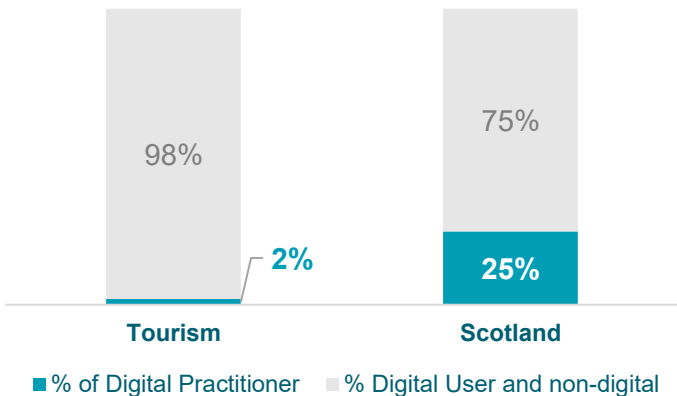
Employment ¹

In 2022, **2%** of people employed in the Tourism sector were employed in Digital Practitioner roles. This was lower than the Scottish average of **15%**.



Gross Value Added (GVA)²

Digital Practitioner roles within the Tourism sector make a small contribution to the GVA of the whole sector (**2%** in 2022), higher than the average in Scotland.



Digital Insight for Tourism³



In Scotland’s tourism sector, the presence of dedicated digital practitioner roles is relatively limited, reflecting a broader emphasis on digital adoption across the wider workforce. Rather than relying on specialist digital roles, the sector is increasingly focused on equipping staff with essential digital skills that support core business functions.

While digital transformation is underway, much of the innovation is being driven by external traveltech providers, meaning the shift within tourism businesses themselves is more gradual. Building digital confidence and capability across all roles will be key to supporting sustainable growth and ensuring the sector remains competitive in a digitally connected world.

1. SDS analysis of Lightcast Labour Market Data (2022, accessed in 2024).
2. SDS analysis of Annual Business Survey Data (2022, published in 2024).
3. Insight from the sector gathered via Skills Development Scotland (2025).

Future Demand: Mid-term (2025-2028)¹

In the mid-term (2025-2028), **the number of people in employment is forecast to grow by 3.4% (6,900 people)** in the **Tourism** sector. This is a larger percentage growth than is forecast overall across Scotland where employment is anticipated to rise by 2.5% (68,000 people).

By 2028, the regions forecast to have the greatest level of sectoral employment are **Edinburgh, East and Midlothian** and **Glasgow College Region**, the same as in 2025. Between 2025 and 2028, the greatest growth is forecast to be in **Elementary Occupations: Clerical and Services (1,000 people)**, followed by **Managers / Proprietors In Agriculture and Services (900 people)**.

Forecasts for the mid-term (2025-2028) suggest there could be demand for **43,100 people in the sector**, as a result of the **need to replace workers** leaving the labour market and **opportunities created** through expansion demand. Whilst positive, caution is needed as a wide range of factors may impact the labour market over this period.

Workforce (people), 2028¹



Workforce size 2028: **207,500** people



The sector's workforce is expected to **grow** by **3.4%** (or **6,900** people) between 2025 and 2028



Compared to a Scotland wide increase of **2.5%** or **68,000** people

Total Requirement^{1,2}



=



+



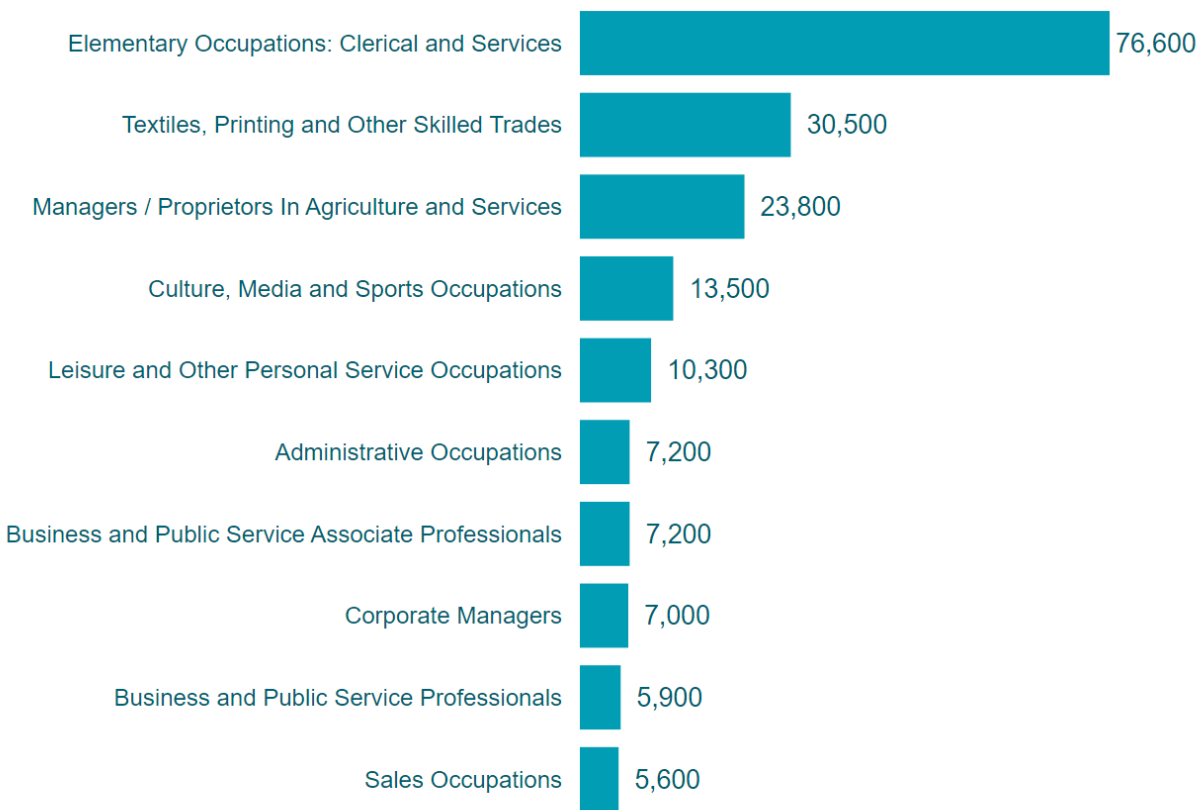
Total requirement:
43,100 people

Replacement demand:
36,300 people

Expansion demand:
6,900 people

Tourism is forecast to account for **10.8%** of Scotland's total requirement for people in the mid-term (2025-2028)

Top 10 Employing Occupations (people), 2028¹



1. SDS (2025). Oxford Economics Forecasts.

2.Total requirement for people is made up of expansion and replacement demand.

The expansion demand is the number of people required as a result of economic growth or contraction.

The replacement demand is the number of people required to replace workers leaving the labour market (i.e. those who retire, move away or change jobs). Please note, figures are rounded to the nearest 100 and as a result totals may not equal the sum of the constituent parts.

Future Demand: Long-term (2028-2035)¹

Employment growth in the **Tourism** sector is forecast to continue, with an increase of 4.5% (9,400 people) in the long-term (2028-2035). This is a larger percentage growth than is anticipated overall across Scotland where employment is forecast to rise by 4.0% (112,500 people).

By 2035, the regions forecast to have the greatest level of sectoral employment are **Edinburgh, East and Midlothian** and **Glasgow College Region**. Between 2028 and 2035, the greatest growth is forecast to be in **Corporate Managers (1,800 people)**, followed by **Culture, Media and Sports Occupations (1,300)** in the sector.

Forecasts for the long-term (2028-2035) estimate that **95,100 people** could be required in the sector. This will be driven by **the need to replace workers** leaving the labour market **and the creation of opportunities** through expansion demand. Whilst positive, caution is needed as a wide range of factors may impact the labour market over this period.

Workforce (people), 2035¹



Workforce size 2035: **216,900** people



The sector's workforce is expected to **grow** by **4.5%** (or **9,400** people) between 2028 and 2035



Compared to a Scotland wide increase of **4.0%** or **112,500** people

Total Requirement^{1,2}



=



+



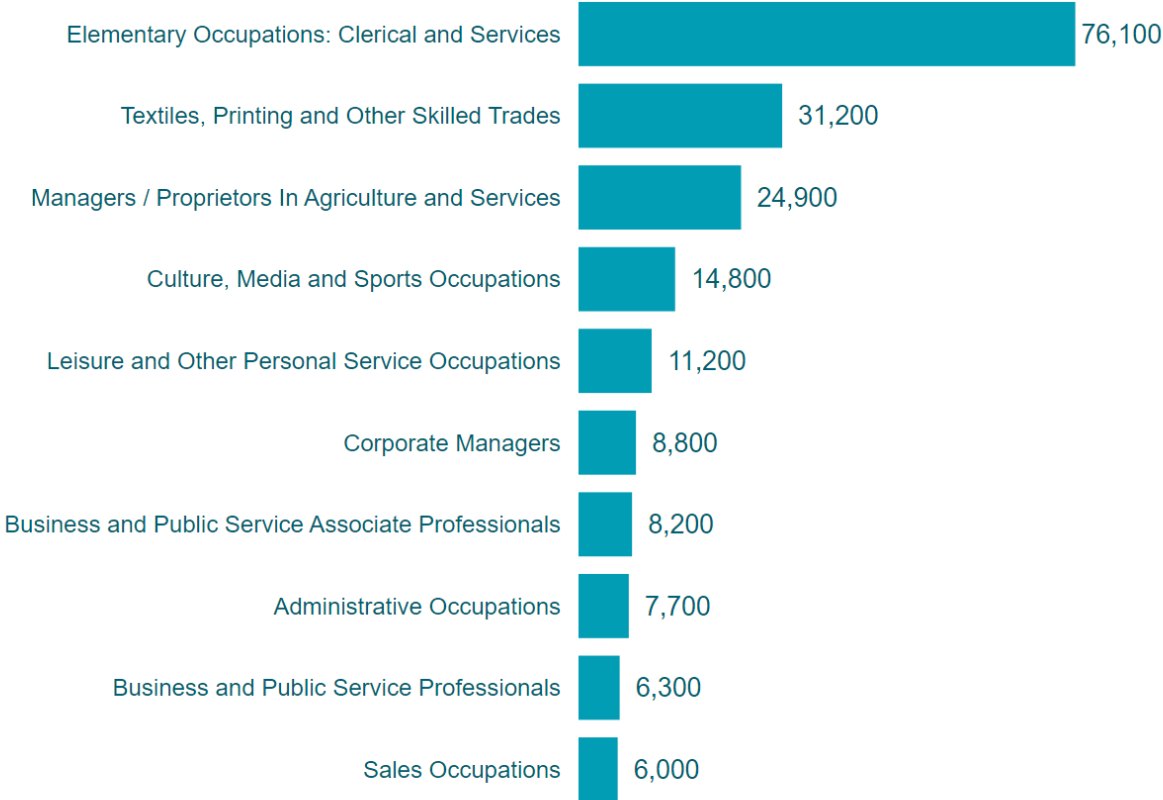
Total requirement:
95,100 people

Replacement demand:
85,700 people

Expansion demand:
9,400 people

Tourism is forecast to account for **10.7%** of Scotland's total requirement for people in the long-term (2028-2035)

Top 10 Employing Occupations (people), 2035¹



1. SDS (2025). Oxford Economics Forecasts.

2. Total requirement for people is made up of expansion and replacement demand.

The expansion demand is the number of people required as a result of economic growth or contraction.

The replacement demand is the number of people required to replace workers leaving the labour market (i.e. those who retire, move away or change jobs). Please note, figures are rounded to the nearest 100 and as a result totals may not equal the sum of the constituent parts.

Appendix 1: Tourism Sector Definition (SIC 2007)

SIC	Name
55.1	Hotels and similar accommodation
55.2	Holiday and other short-stay accommodation
55.3	Camping grounds, recreational vehicle parks and trailer parks
56.1	Restaurants and mobile food service activities
56.3	Beverage serving activities
79.12	Tour operator activities
79.9	Other reservation service and related activities
91.02	Museum activities
91.03	Operation of historical sites and buildings and similar visitor attractions
91.04	Botanical and zoological gardens and nature reserve activities
93.11	Operation of sports facilities
93.19/9	Other sports activities (not including activities of racehorse owners) n.e.c.
93.21	Activities of amusement parks and theme parks
93.29	Other amusement and recreation activities

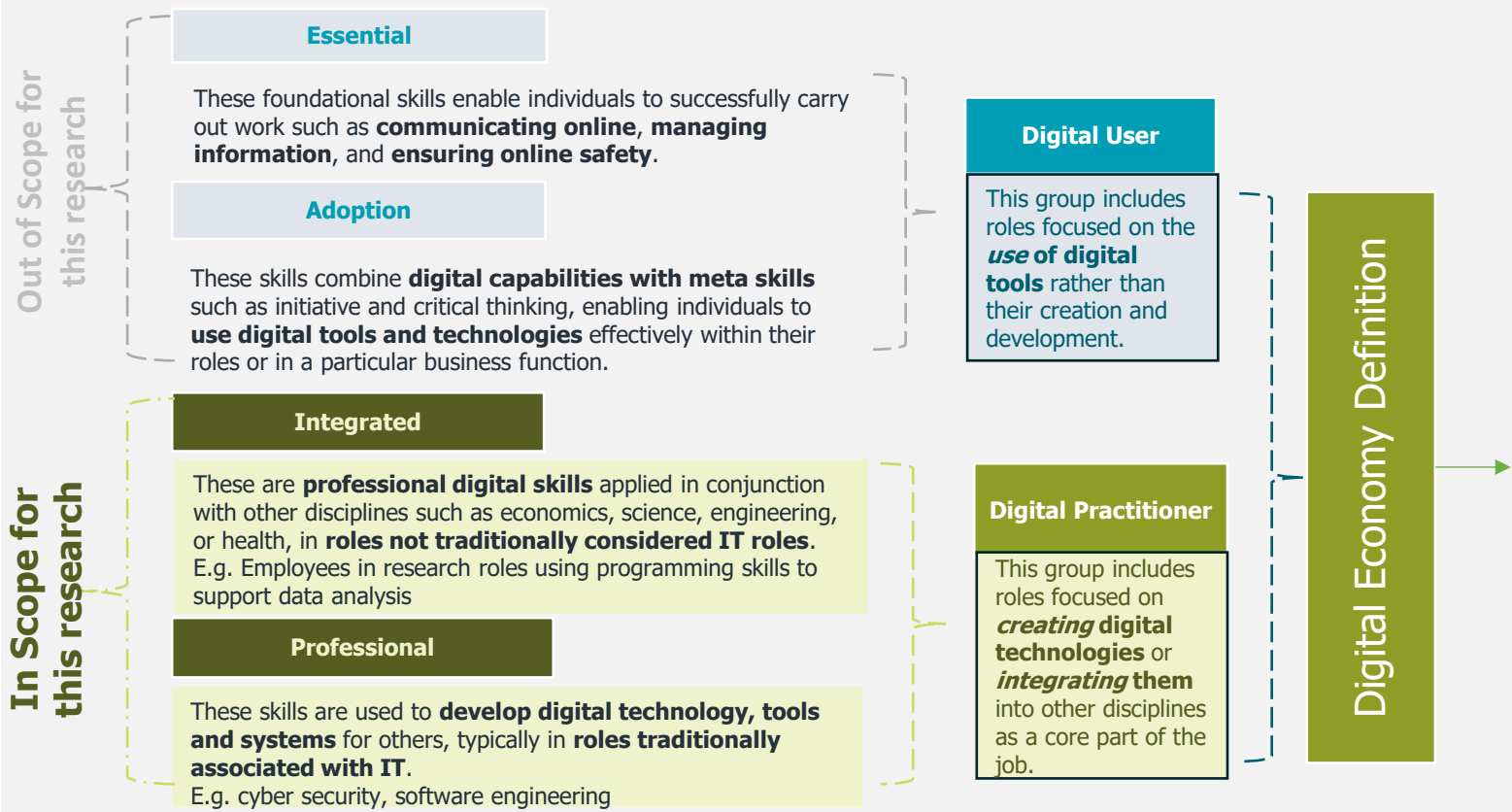
Project Background

In March 2023, SDS released the [Digital Economy Skills Action Plan](#) (DESAP), which emphasised the increasing importance of digital skills across all sectors in Scotland. While the Digital Tech Sector is well-defined and focuses on activity related to the production of digital technologies, the DESAP noted a lack of comparable data for the wider Digital Economy (which encompasses all economic activity that is enabled by digital technology) due to an unclear definition. To address this, SDS worked collaboratively with stakeholders to define the Digital Economy with the aim of improving the understanding of related jobs and skills.

Methodology

Following a literature review and stakeholder consultations, a final definition of the digital economy was produced (see below). This was then used to identify jobs (based on SOCs) and skills (from the Lightcast Skill Taxonomy) that were considered part of the Digital Economy. The research focused on Digital Practitioners as a particular area of interest to understand how skills that create or integrate digital technologies are permeating across occupations. This list of Digital Practitioner jobs and skills was then applied to the Scottish Labour Market to assess the economic value of Digital Practitioner jobs in Scotland.

Definition of the Digital Economy



Key Findings for Scotland



Estimated at almost 400,000, Digital Practitioner jobs in Scotland account for **15% of the total workforce.** This is comparable to the size of the Human Health and Social Work sector.



Digital practitioner roles contribute £34.6 billion in GVA to Scotland's economy, which represents around **25% of Scotland's GVA.**



At least **half** of all Digital Practitioner job postings require a **bachelor's degree or equivalent.**



The median advertised salary for Digital Practitioner job postings in Scotland was **£38,627. This was 35% higher than the average median advertised salary across all Scottish job postings.**



For further information or queries on the SSAs or any of our other products, please contact: [**RSA@sds.co.uk**](mailto:RSA@sds.co.uk)