

Automotive labour market briefing



Overview

The UK automotive sector is a cornerstone of the national economy, employing 866,000 people and contributing £37 billion annually through more than 100,000 businesses. The sector's breadth highlights its importance and the challenges of understanding its evolving labour market. We must keep investing in workforce development, regional hiring, and skills training to stay resilient and competitive as it evolves.

Vacancy rates

- In October 2024, the Motor Trades sector had the second-highest vacancy rate at 3.3%, or 19,000 vacancies. This shows ongoing hiring challenges, despite a decline from a 5% peak in mid-2022.
- By late 2024, vacancy rates aligned more closely with the overall UK average, suggesting the labour market is stabilising.

Job posting trends

- Vehicle technicians dominate job postings, showing their critical importance. Technical roles consistently have higher recruitment intensity relative to workforce size.
- While overall job postings decreased, job posting activity has notably increased in some regions outside England, including Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Skills demand and EV trends

- Core skills in maintenance and diagnostics are in high demand. Employers need less specific automotive sector experience, suggesting they are broadening their hiring criteria.
- EV skills have grown significantly in job postings since 2020, peaking in 2023. However, this trend plateaued over the past year at 6% of all postings.

Salaries

- Salaries for specialised roles are rising. Vehicle paint technicians earn the highest salaries at £40,100, which is a 20% increase over two years.
- Salaries for other technical roles, like vehicle body builders and repairers, have grown by 29% over two years, though this growth has now stabilised.

Defining the labour market

The IMI stands out from many professional organisations by promoting the entire automotive sector, not just one profession. This includes various subsectors and occupations, making it both challenging and important to understand the labour market.

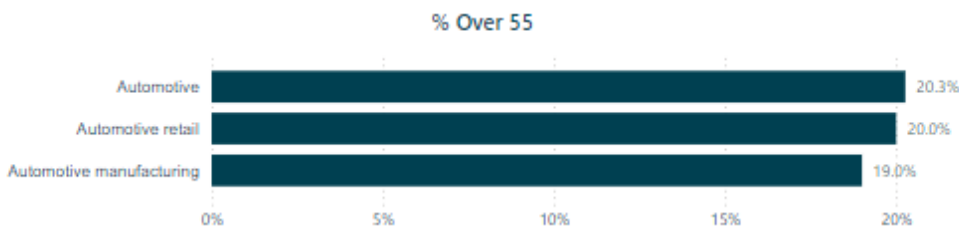
There are 618,000 jobs in automotive retail, 142,000 in automotive manufacturing, and 106,000 in automotive occupations across different industries, resulting in a total of 866,000 jobs.



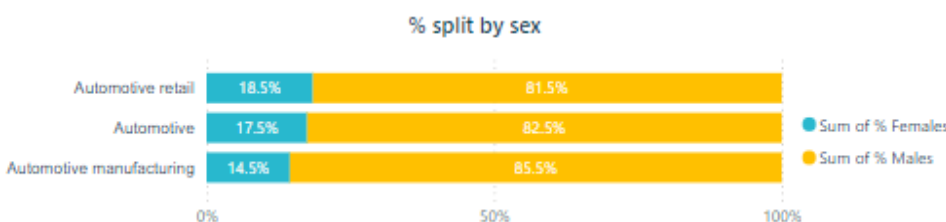
Number working in automotive – 2023

It also contributes £37 billion to the UK economy through more than 100,000 businesses and organisations.

Industry	GVA	Establishments
Automotive retail	£26,602,628,778	97,322
Automotive manufacturing	£10,450,687,654	3,319
Automotive	£37,053,316,432	100,641



18% of the sector are female and 20% are over the age of 55.



*The full report is available only to fee-paying IMI members. To access the full report, contact the IMI membership team to upgrade your membership.

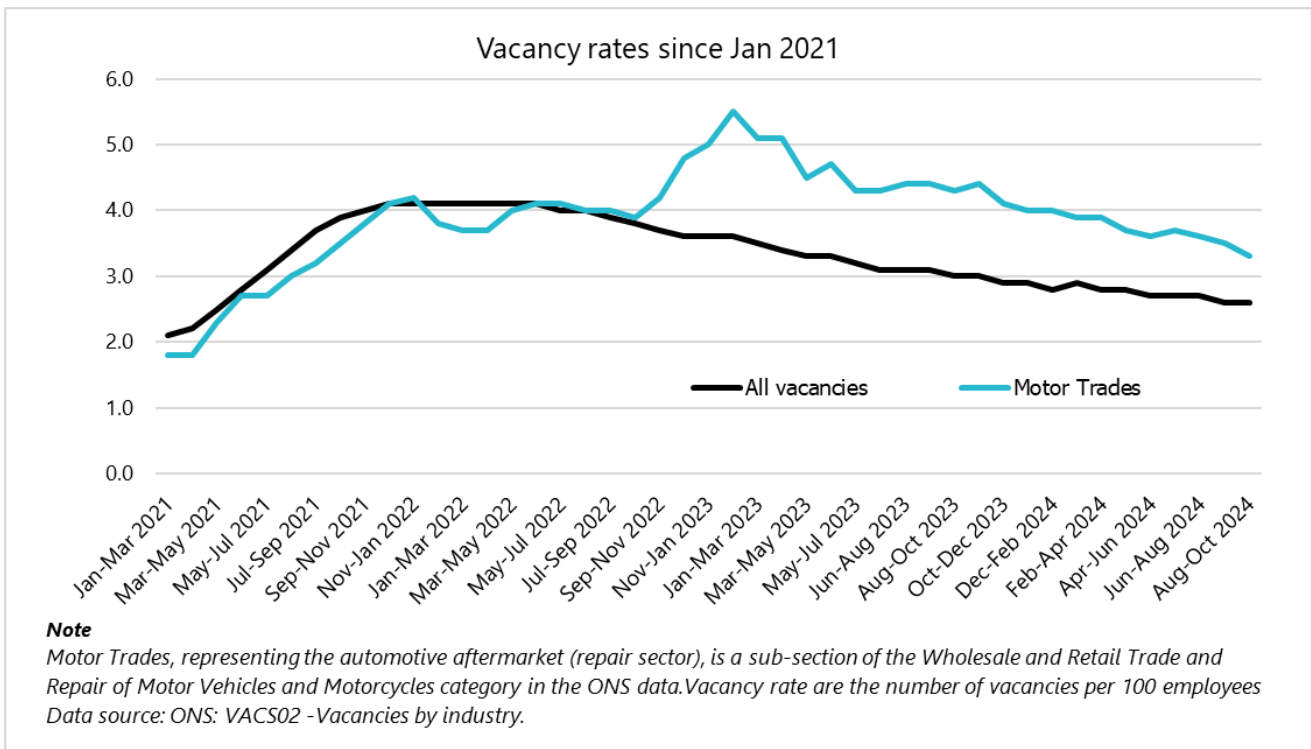
Vacancy rates

In October 2024, the Motor Trades sector had the second-highest vacancy rate of any sector at 3.3%, representing 19,000 vacancies.



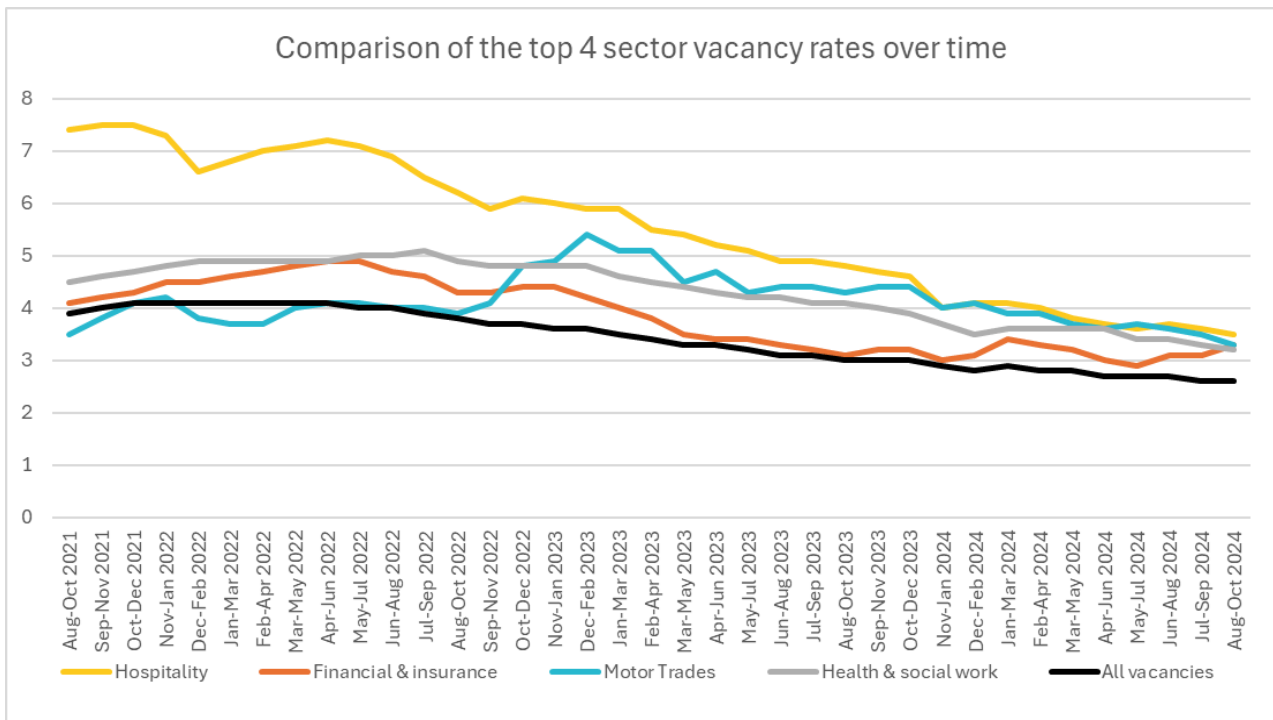
Monthly ONS vacancy data shows that, although vacancy rates in the Motor Trades sector have declined since their peak in early 2023, they remain significantly higher than the average across all sectors.

However, in the most recent month, this gap has narrowed as Motor Trades vacancy rates reached their lowest point since September 2021.



Motor Trades sector vacancy rate starting at around 4% in August-October 2021, experienced a modest rise, peaking at approximately 5% by mid-2022.

This peak likely reflects recruitment challenges during a period of high labour demand, possibly driven by recovery efforts after the pandemic. Compared to other sectors, this peak was less pronounced than in Hospitality, which faced significantly higher and more volatile vacancy rates. It was more similar to Health and Social Work, which also experienced a gradual rise during the same period.



From mid-2022 onwards, vacancy rates in Motor Trades steadily declined, aligning with the broader downward trend in overall UK vacancies. By August to October 2024, the vacancy rate for Motor Trades dropped to around 3%, closely mirroring the average for all sectors.

This trend contrasts with Hospitality, which started with the highest vacancy rates (7-8%) and, although declining, stayed higher than other sectors for most of the period.

Financial and Insurance sectors showed relative stability throughout but had slightly higher rates than Motor Trades for much of the timeframe. Health and Social Work saw its vacancy rate peak later, around mid-2023, before starting a gradual decline.

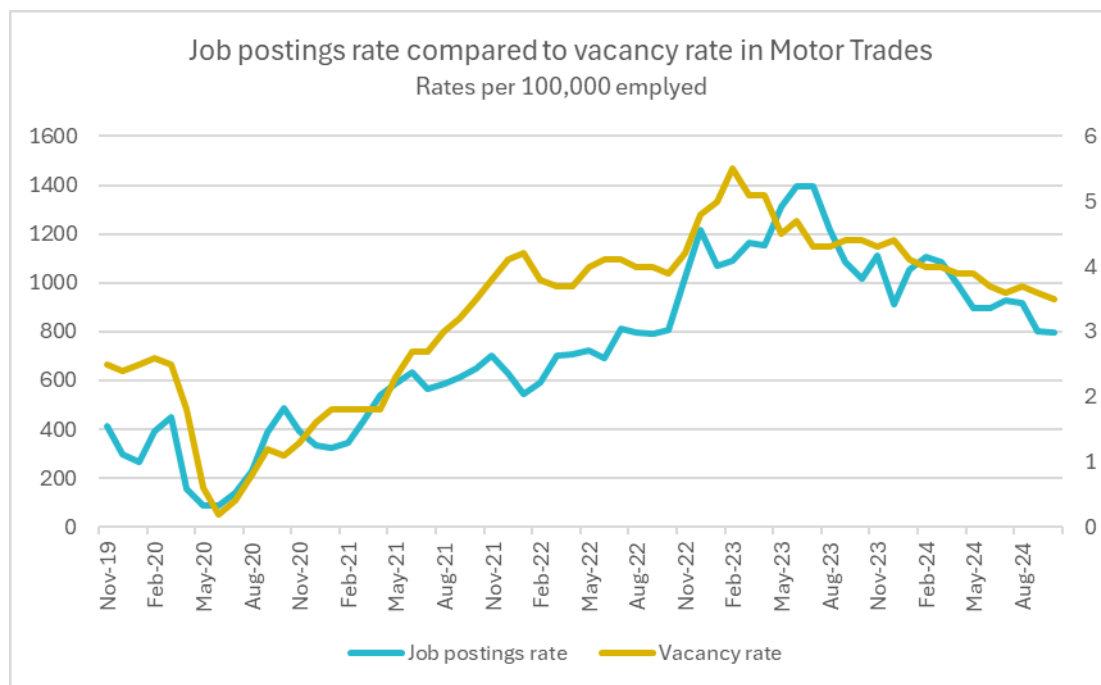
The convergence of Motor Trades with the overall average by late 2024 suggests the automotive labour market is stabilising. However, the sector's initial fluctuation highlights the challenges it faced, including adapting to evolving skill requirements and technological advancements.

Compared to the pronounced volatility in Hospitality and the steady trends in Financial and Insurance, Motor Trades shows a balanced trajectory, indicating a sector undergoing both disruption and adaptation.

This stabilisation emphasises the need for ongoing investment in workforce development and training to keep the automotive sector resilient amid ongoing changes.

Skills and in-demand roles

Job posting trends

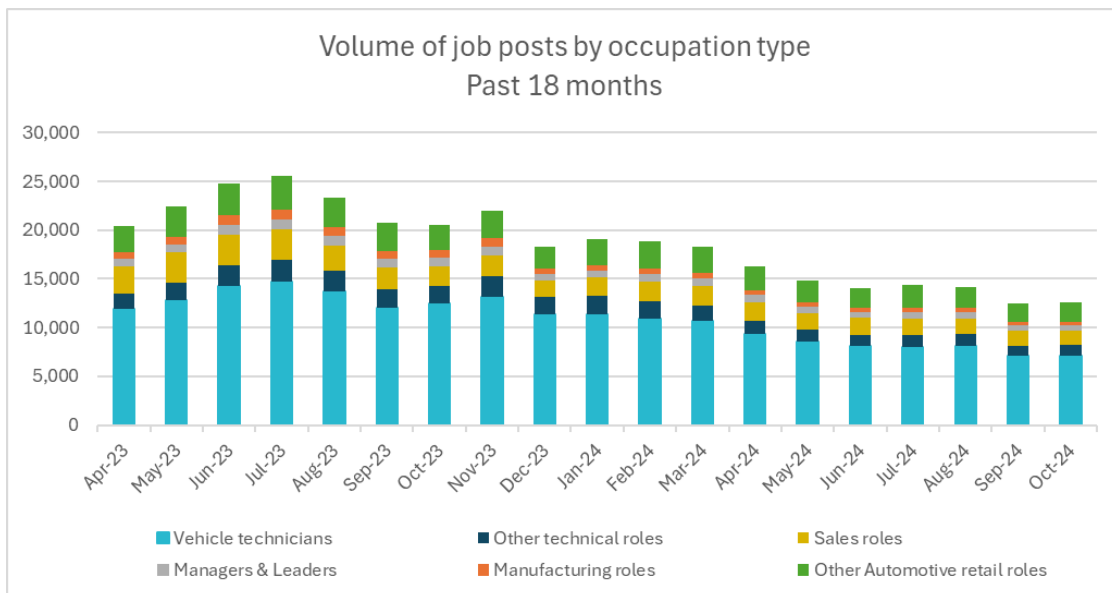


The graph shows trends in job postings and vacancy rates in the Motor Trades sector, measured per 100,000 employed, from November 2019 to August 2024. Both rates dropped significantly in early 2020 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting a downturn in hiring activity.

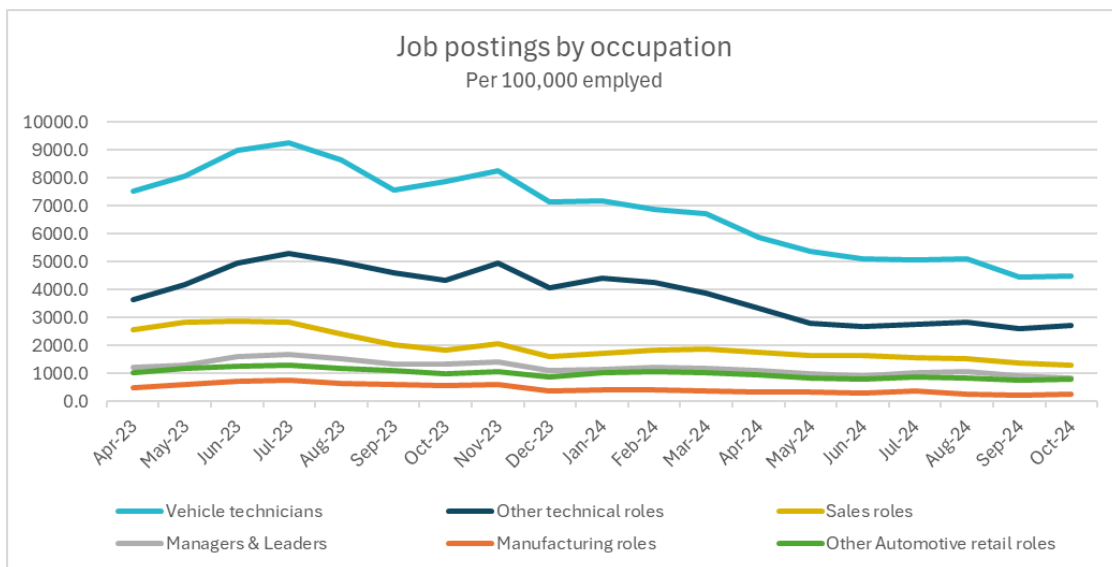
However, as both rates recovered steadily from mid-2020, the job postings rate started to exceed the vacancy rate by late 2021. This suggests that employers were actively advertising roles, possibly due to increased competition for labour or specific recruitment challenges in the sector.

From late 2022 onwards, both rates showed a downward trend, but the job postings rate consistently stayed higher than the vacancy rate. This indicates that, although the demand for labour was decreasing, employers continued advertising roles at a high level.

This divergence could reflect differences between advertised vacancies and the actual fulfilment of roles. By late 2023, the two rates began to converge, suggesting a stabilisation in the labour market, where the volume of advertised positions may have started aligning more closely with actual vacancies.



Vehicle Technicians make up the largest share of job postings, showing their critical importance to the sector. Other technical roles, sales roles, and automotive retail roles also contribute significantly to overall hiring activity. However, in absolute terms, managerial, manufacturing, and other roles play a noticeable but comparatively smaller part in total recruitment.



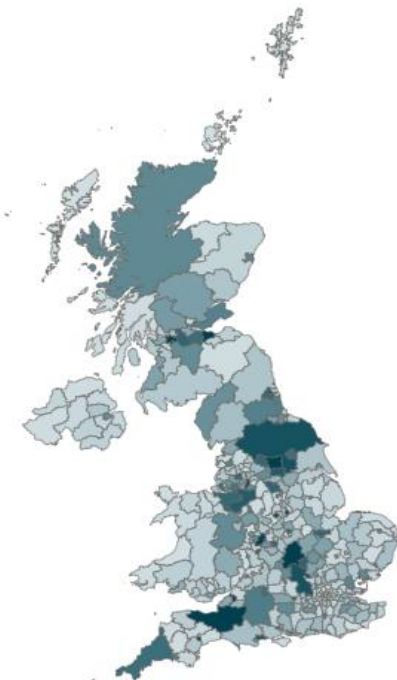
The second graph, which shows job postings per 100,000 employed, offers a proportional view, highlighting recruitment intensity relative to the workforce size in each occupation.

It reveals that technical roles, especially Vehicle Technicians, dominate labour demand when adjusted for employment size, with a postings rate far above other roles.

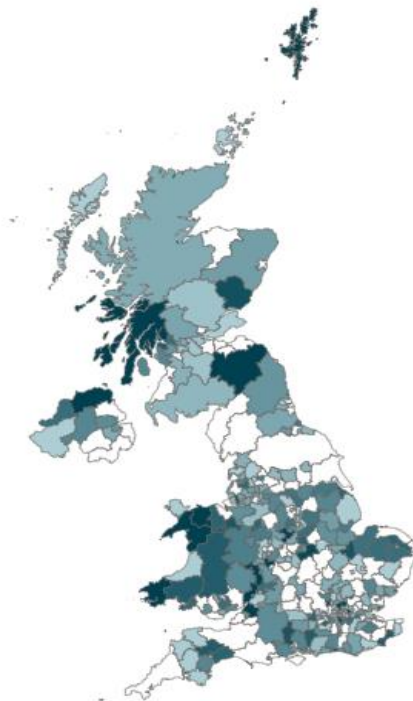
Other technical roles also have a high rate of postings per 100,000 employed, showing increased recruitment efforts in these key areas. In contrast, managerial, sales, and retail roles, although significant in absolute terms, have much lower proportional demand.

Geographical analysis of job postings in automotive retail

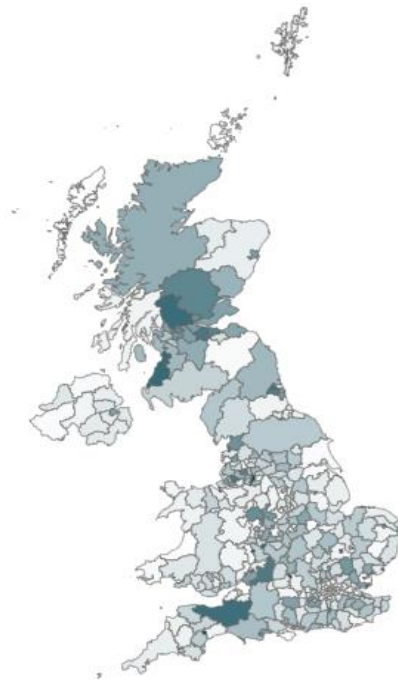
Volume of job posts within automotive retail
6 months (April - Oct 2024)



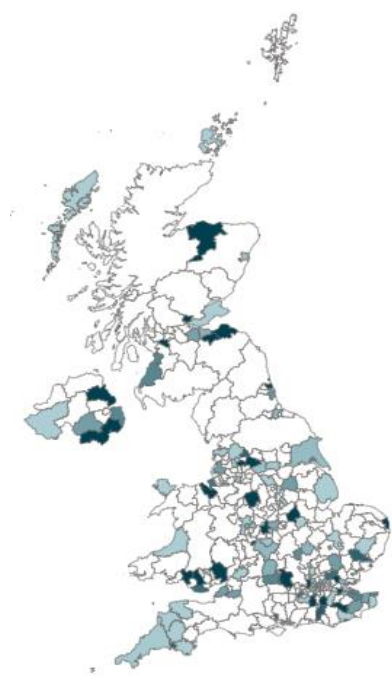
Areas with a decrease in job posts within automotive retail
April to October 2024



Average monthly posts per 1000 employed
Average posts between April and October 2024



Areas with an increase in job posts within automotive retail
April to October 2024



The heat maps above show the volume of job postings across UK local authority areas over the past six months, displayed both in absolute terms and relative to the number of employed individuals per 1,000.

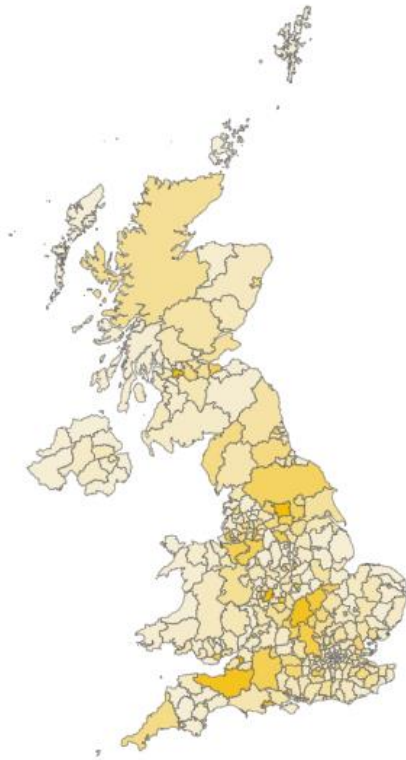
Notable areas include Glasgow, Somerset, Manchester, Edinburgh, and Exeter, which have high job posting volumes as well as elevated rates per 1,000 employed. While Bristol records the highest overall number of job postings, its significance lessens when adjusted for the local automotive employment base.

Job postings have increased over the past month across the UK, with notable rises outside England. These include Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot, and Flintshire in Wales; East Renfrewshire, East Lothian, and Clackmannanshire in Scotland; and Mid and East Antrim and Newry, Mourne, and Down in Northern Ireland. However, some of these areas still have relatively low posting volumes.

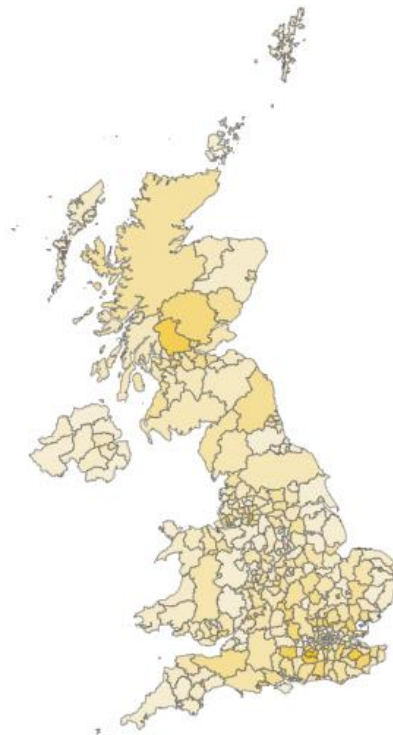
Reading has experienced a 55% decrease in job postings despite being one of the largest areas by volume.

Geographical analysis of job postings for automotive technical roles

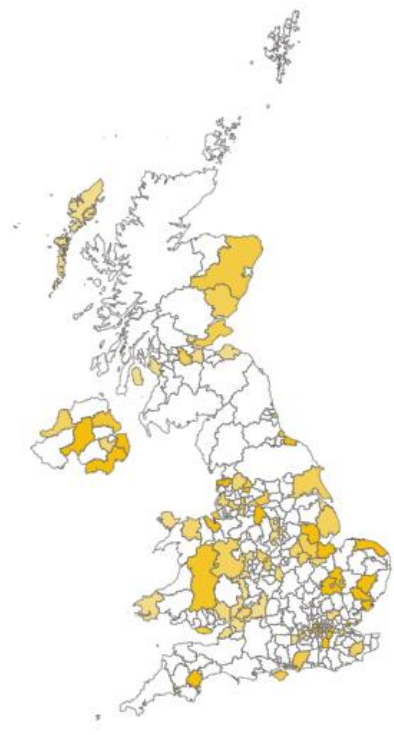
Volume of job posts for technical roles
6 months (April - Oct 2024)



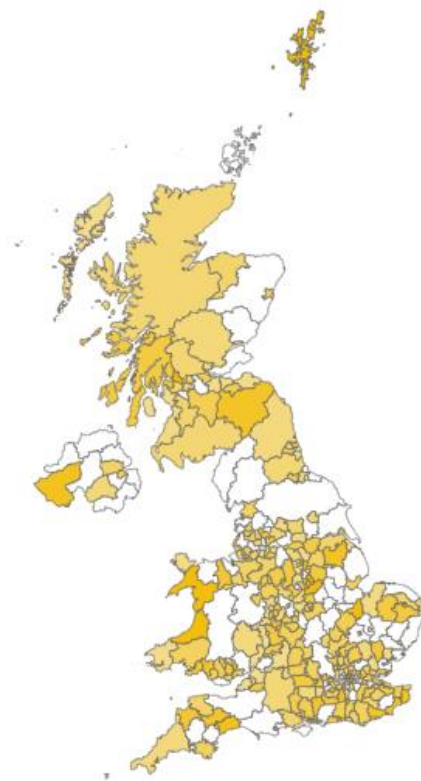
Average monthly posts per 1000
employed
Average posts between April and October 2024



Areas with an increase in job posts for
technical roles
April to October 2024



Areas with a decrease in job posts for
technical roles
April to October 2024



Manchester, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, Liverpool, Exeter, Guildford, Cherwell, Chelmsford, Cambridge, Basingstoke and Deane, Crawley, and Gloucester stand out for their high job posting volumes and elevated rates per 1,000 employed.

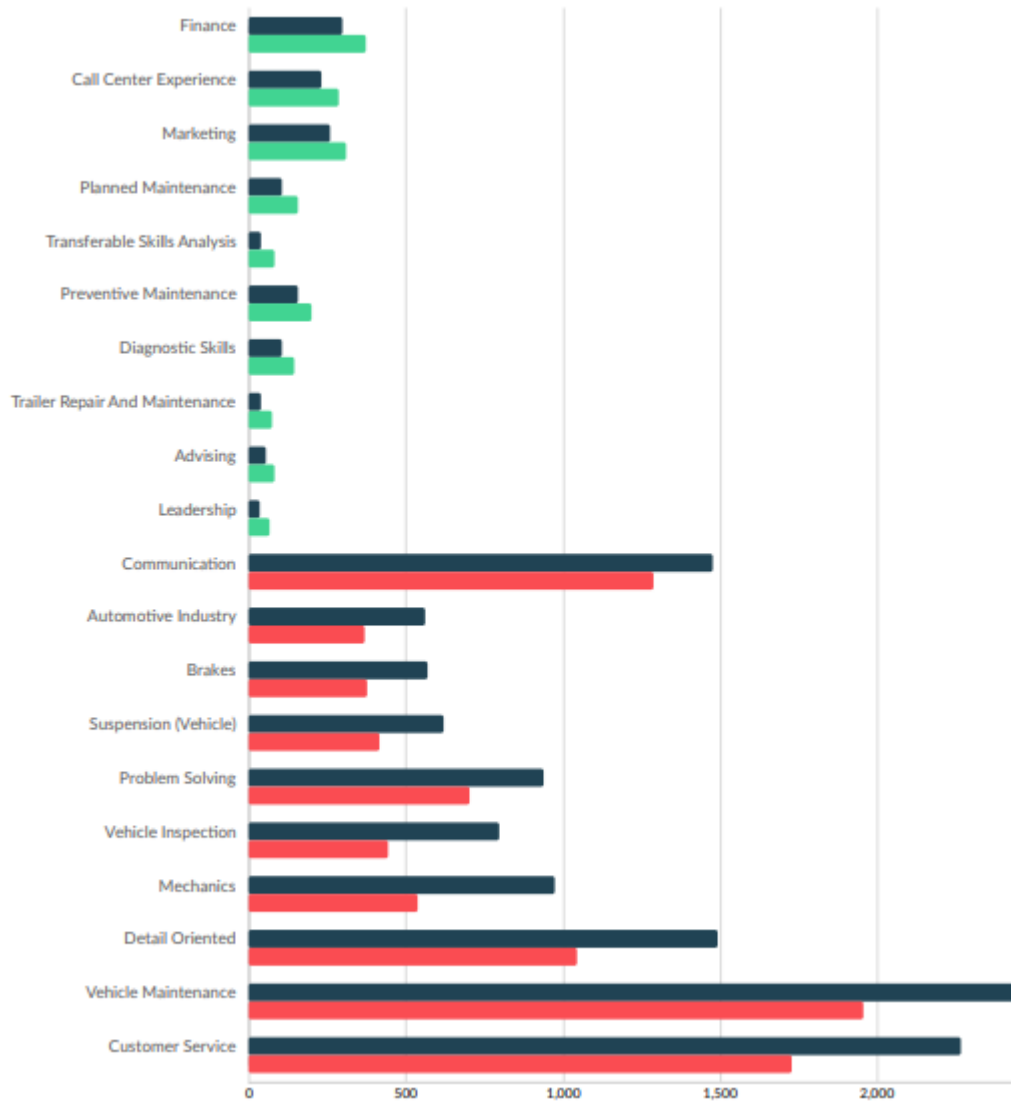
Similar to all automotive retail job postings, Bristol has the highest overall number of job postings, but its significance lessens when adjusted for the local automotive employment base.

Job posting increases over the past month have spread across the UK, with clusters emerging in Eastern and Southern Scotland, Northern Ireland, West Wales, and the North West and East of England.

Job postings in Nottingham have decreased by 41%, despite it being one of the largest areas by volume.

Skills

Hot and cold skills in technical roles



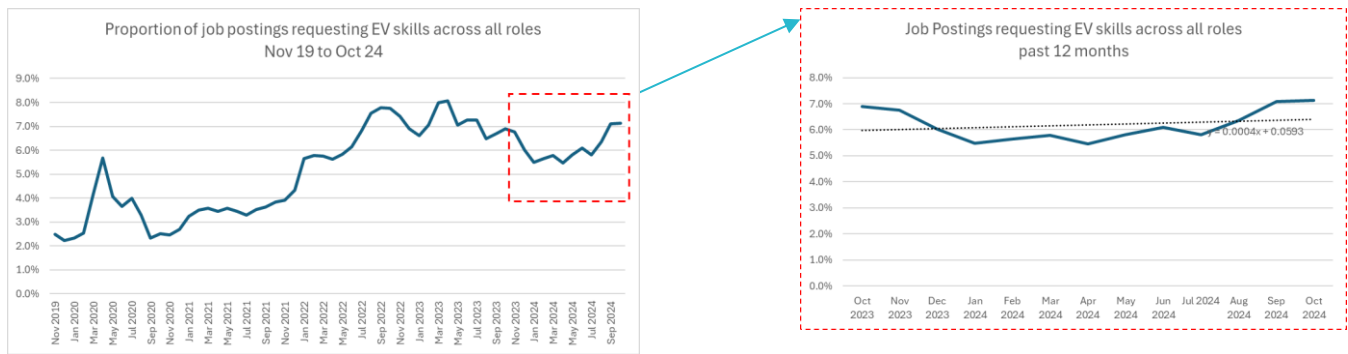
Green bars show an increase in job postings for technical roles, reflecting growing demand for these specific skills, while red bars indicate a decline.

A clear trend shows that core service and maintenance skills—such as planned maintenance, preventative maintenance, and diagnostics—are in high demand.

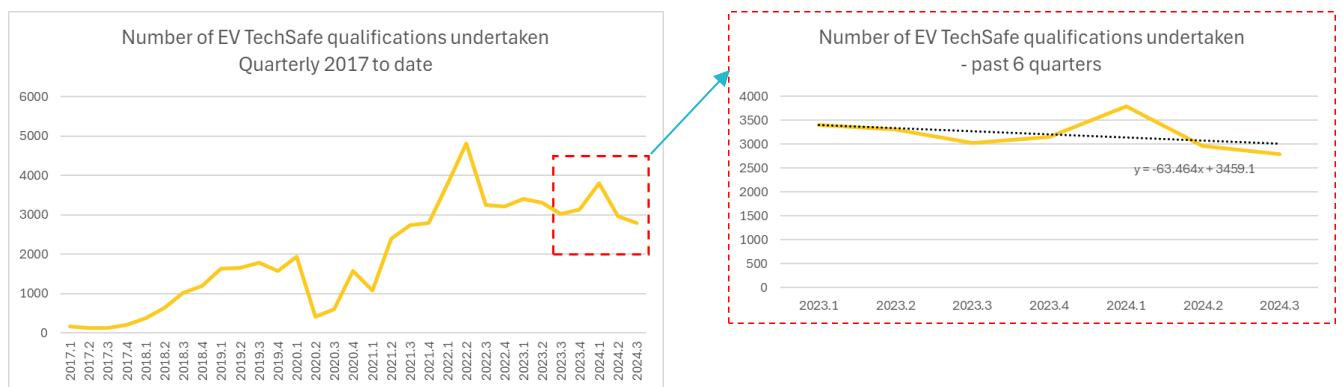
Meanwhile, the need for automotive industry-specific experience has decreased, suggesting that employers are broadening their search to address current hiring challenges in the sector.

EV skills

The following section examines how often EV skills are requested in job postings.

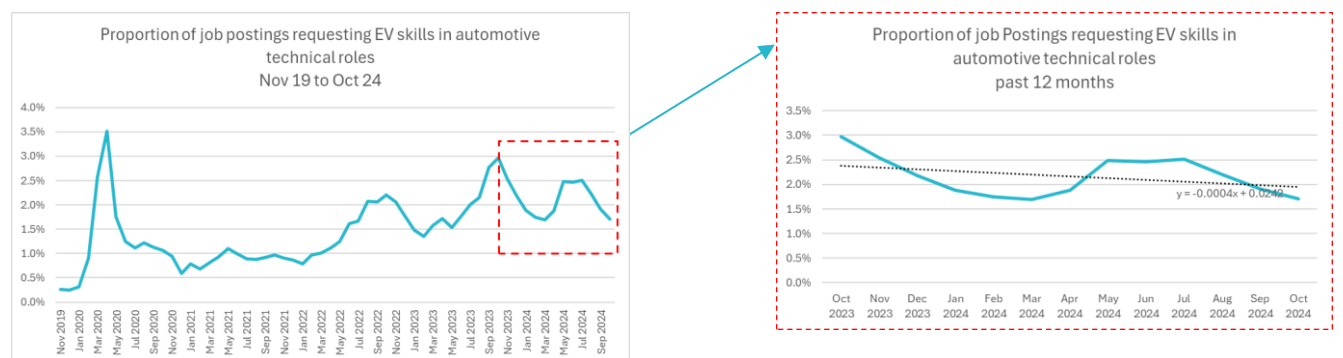


Across all automotive roles, the share of job postings requesting electric vehicle (EV) skills increased notably from 2020 to 2023. However, this upward trend has plateaued over the past 12 months, with only marginal growth of 0.04% per month, stabilising at around 6% of total job postings.



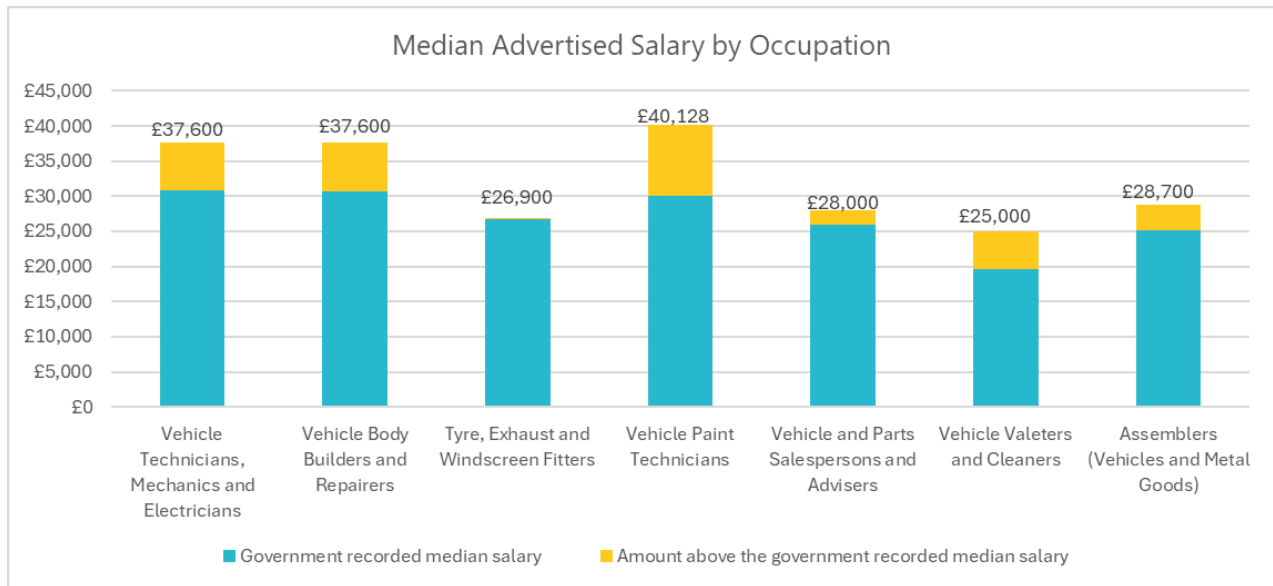
In technical roles, a different pattern appears. Although the share of postings requesting EV skills also rose steadily from 2020 to 2023, the growth rate has been much slower.

Over the past 12 months, similar to the trend across all roles, this growth has plateaued, with a slight decline of 0.04% per month. This trend may seem unexpected but likely reflects the earlier adoption of EV technologies by engineers, manufacturers, and automotive trainers, where demand for these skills surged.



A similar pattern appears in the adoption of EV qualifications eligible for TechSafe accreditation. Uptake grew substantially from 2020 but has slowed over the past 18 months, mirroring the decline observed in job postings for technical roles.

Median advertised salaries



This analysis focuses on median advertised salaries for sales roles, excluding benefits or bonuses. The figures show UK averages and may vary by region.

Occupation	Median Advertised Salary	Change in past year	Past Year %Chg	Change in past 2 years	Past 2 year %Chg
Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics and Electricians	£37,600	£1,756	4.8%	£3,548	10.2%
Vehicle Body Builders and Repairers	£37,600	-\$260	-0.7%	£8,508	29.3%
Tyre, Exhaust and Windscreen Fitters	£26,900	£1,452	5.6%	£2,476	9.9%
Vehicle Paint Technicians	£40,128	£2,636	6.6%	£7,244	20.4%
Vehicle and Parts Salespersons and Advisers	£28,000	£1,544	5.6%	£2,824	10.8%
Vehicle Valeters and Cleaners	£25,000	£1,500	6.3%	£3,676	16.8%
Assemblers (Vehicles and Metal Goods)	£28,700	£1,444	5.3%	£3,364	13.2%

Vehicle paint technicians have the highest advertised salaries at £40,100, which is £10,200 above the government median, showing a 20% increase over the past two years.

Salaries for vehicle technicians, mechanics, and electricians have grown by 5% in the past year, putting them £6,800 above the government median.

Salaries for vehicle body builders and repairers are 29% higher than two years ago but have stabilised in the past year, with a marginal decrease of 0.7%.

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