

Automotive labour market briefing



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vacancy rate drop continues

In April 2025, the Motor Trades sector had a 2.8% vacancy rate, the sixth highest across all sectors, amounting to approximately 17,000 vacancies.

Data from the Office for National Statistics continues to report a steady decline since 2023, marking a significant reduction from the 4.9% recorded, representing a 43% drop in vacancies during that time.

Technician demand defies hiring slowdown

Automotive retail hiring has slowed, with vacancies down 24% year-on-year. Managerial roles saw the biggest fall, followed by retail and technician posts.

Despite this, demand for vehicle technicians rose 4%, reflecting ongoing specialist shortages.

Skills demand in customer-facing roles

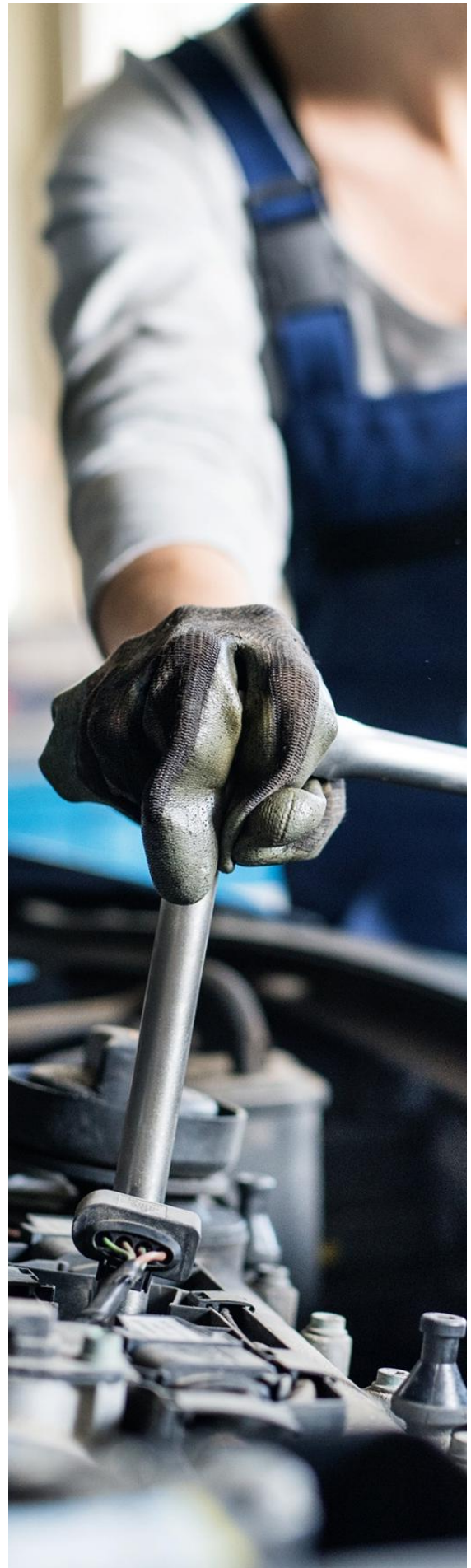
Though demand is increasing for vehicle maintenance, skills in customer service, sales, and management are also on the rise.

This shift reflects that, even as automation and electrification accelerate, people-centric skills are being increasingly recognised as being in short supply.

Rising salaries for most technical roles

Vehicle technicians have the highest advertised salaries in the sector, now sitting £2,560 above the government median after a 13% increase over the past two years.

Most other technical roles have seen even sharper growth, while advertised salaries for paint technicians have remained unchanged over the past year.



OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

Purpose

The IMI covers the whole UK automotive sector, not just one part of it. This sector is a cornerstone of the national economy, employing 866,000 people across automotive retail (618,000), manufacturing (142,000), and other roles (106,000) through more than 100,000 businesses, contributing £37 billion annually.

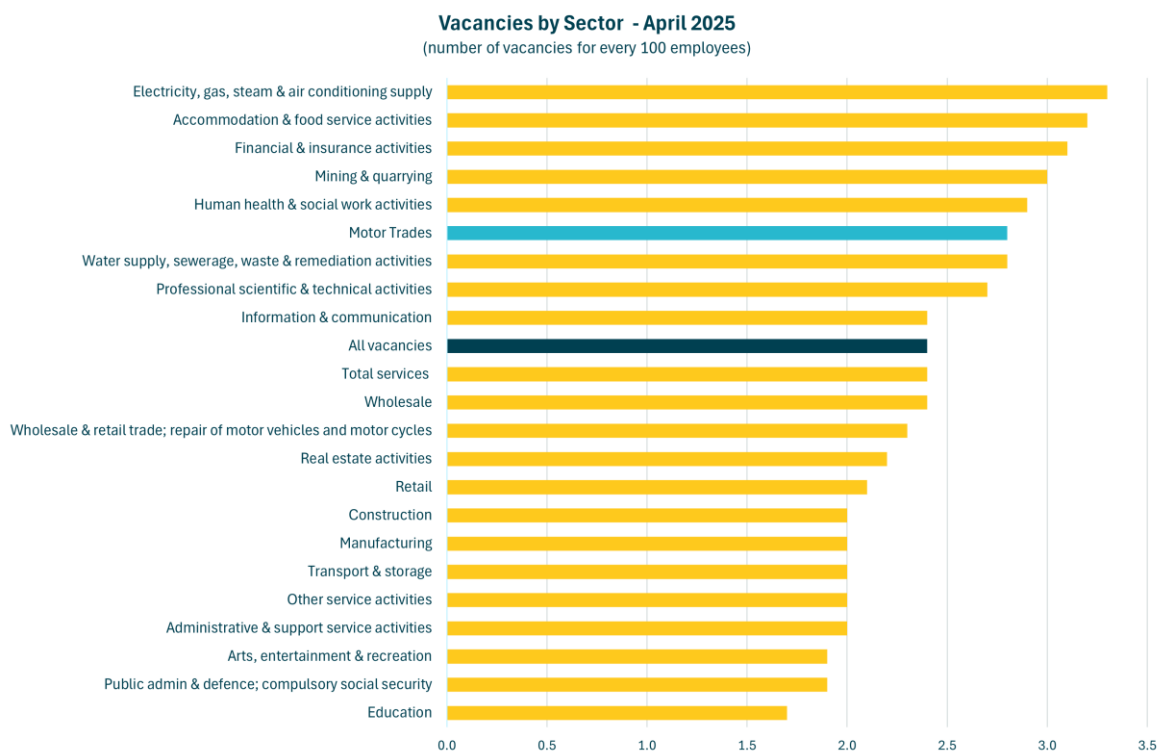
With the labour market constantly evolving, ongoing investment in skills, hiring, and workforce development is vital for competitiveness. That's why we produce this quarterly report—to track changes and help the industry make informed decisions.

The automotive industry contributes £37 billion to the UK economy through more than 100,000 businesses and organisations



ANALYSIS

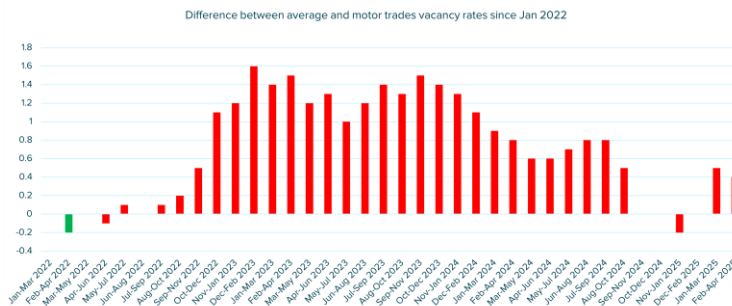
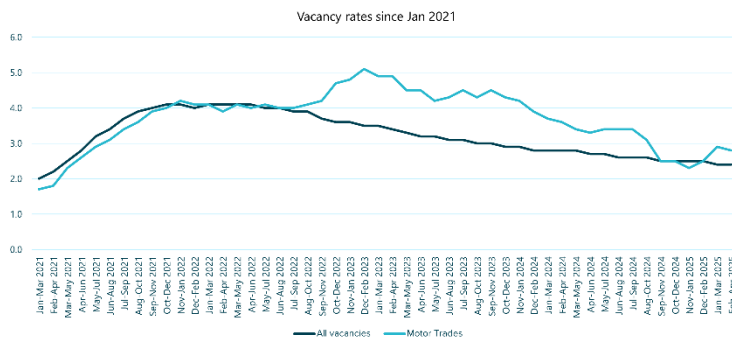
VACANCY RATES



In April 2025, the Motor Trades sector reported a vacancy rate of 2.8%, placing it sixth among the UK's 21 industry groups. This equates to roughly 17,000 open positions. The rate is just 0.1 percentage points above the national average.

Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows a 24% year-on-year drop in Motor Trades vacancies. This marks a significant decline from the 4.9% rate recorded in 2023, representing a 43% decrease over two years. By comparison, total vacancies across the UK have fallen by 29% over the same period.

If this downward trend continues into summer 2025, the Motor Trades sector could fall out of the top ten industries for vacancy rates for the first time since 2021. This would indicate a meaningful reduction in recruitment pressures and suggest that labour demand in the sector is beginning to stabilise.



This trend suggests that recruitment pressures are easing as employers adjust pay and training, while a larger pool of staff become available.

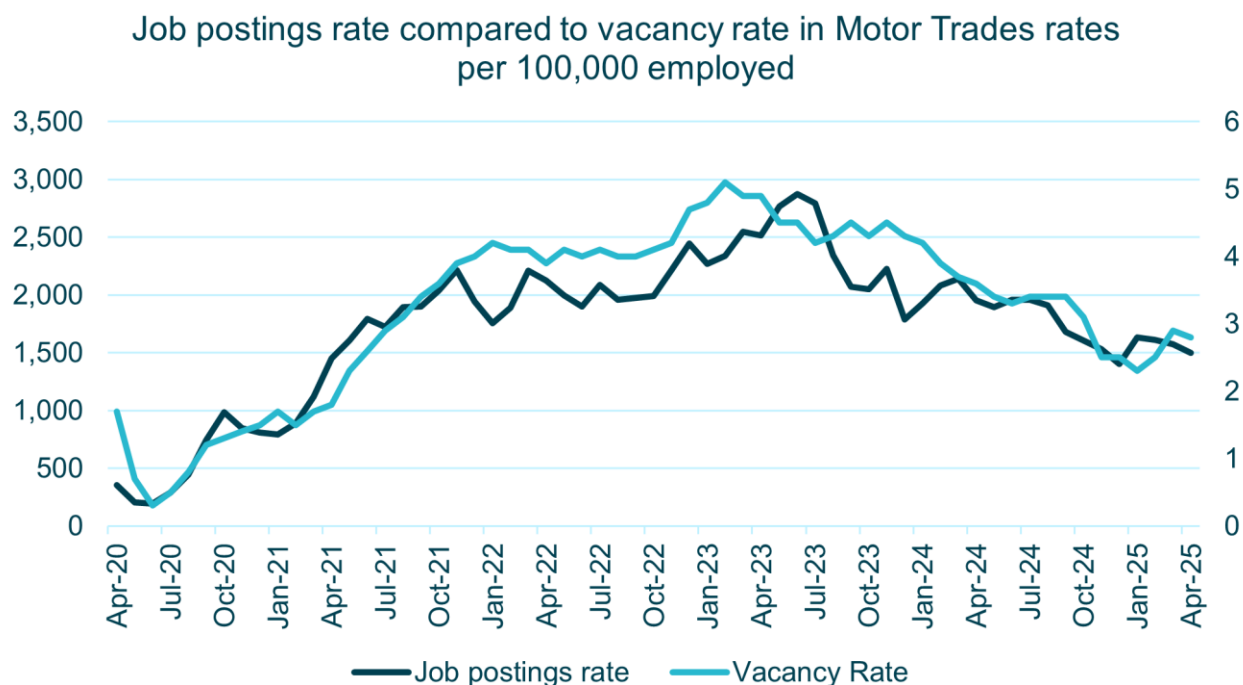
However, vacancy rates stay slightly above the national average, highlighting structural issues such as shortages in specialist roles and uneven demand across regions.

Close monitoring over the next few quarters will reveal whether this improvement marks a lasting recovery or if new challenges emerge, particularly as autumn trading volumes increase.



SKILLS AND IN-DEMAND ROLES

JOB POSTING TRENDS



Job postings vs. vacancy rates

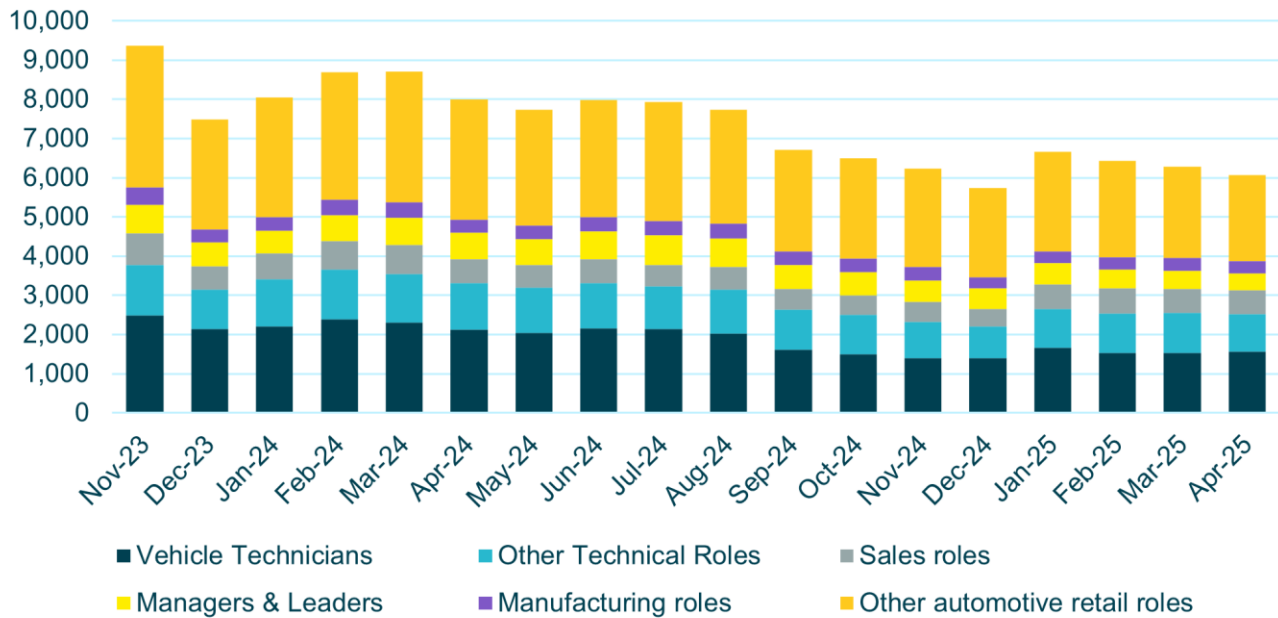
The graph shows trends in job postings and vacancy rates in the Motor Trades sector from April 2020 to April 2025, measured per 100,000 employed people.

Both indicators fell sharply in early 2020 with the onset of COVID-19 but began recovering from mid-2020 as economic activity picked up. By late 2021, job posting surpassed vacancy rates, reflecting increased competition for labour or growing difficulty in filling roles.

This upward trend continued through 2022, peaking in early 2023. After that, vacancy rates declined more rapidly than job postings, suggesting that roles were being filled more efficiently or advertised less often.

In 2024 and early 2025, both measures stabilised at lower levels, with the gap between them narrowing to its smallest since early 2021. This indicates a more balanced hiring environment. However, a recent uptick suggests ongoing demand for staff, and both rates could rise again if business activity increases later in the year.

Volume of job posts by occupation type
past 18 months



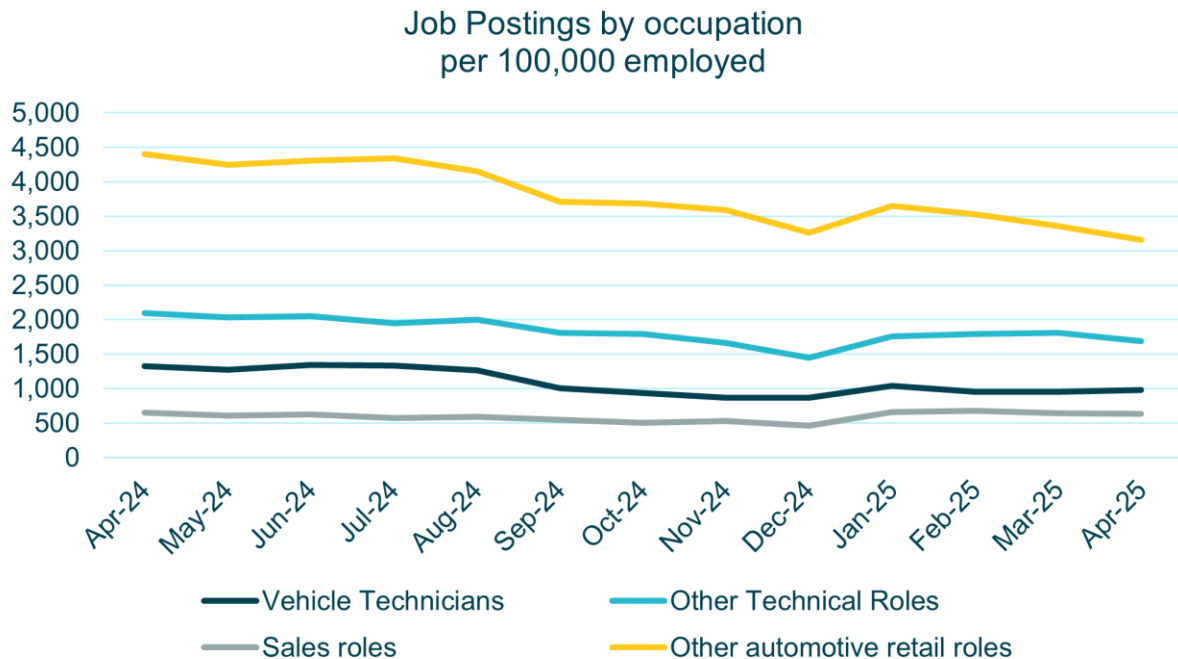
Volume of job postings by occupation type

All six occupation groups show lower posting volumes compared to a year ago, with total vacancies down 24%, indicating a noticeable slowdown in hiring across automotive retail.

The steepest declines are managers and leaders (34%), automotive retail (28%), and vehicle technicians (26%). Other automotive roles make up the largest share of postings at 36%, but only saw modest growth, suggesting employers are replacing staff rather than expanding.

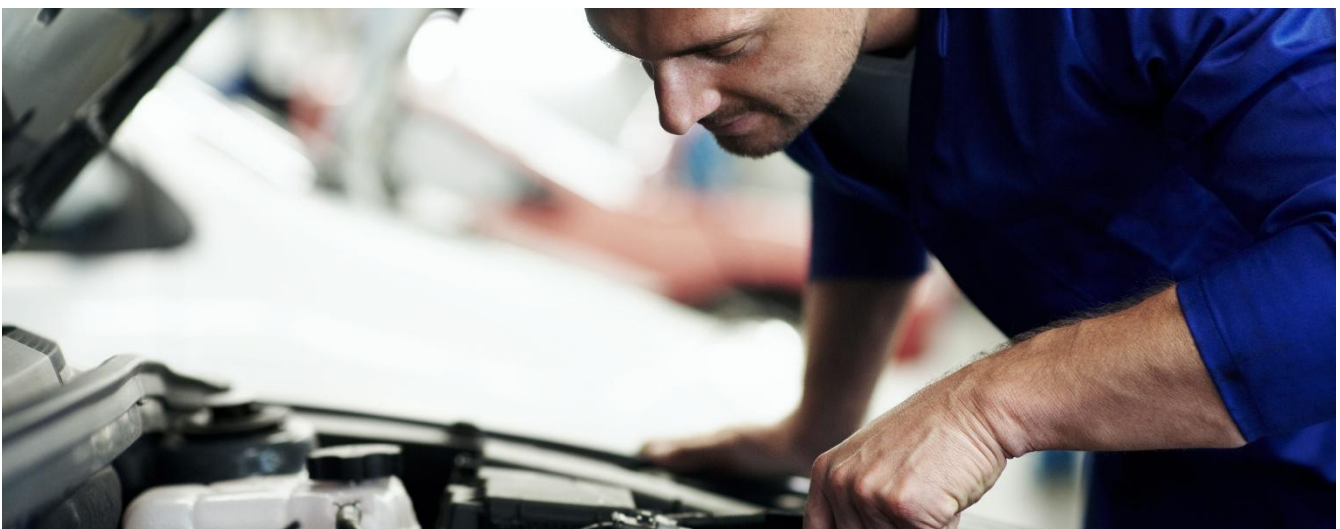
Vehicle technician demand stays strong. After a decline from October to December 2024, postings rose 4% by April 2025 compared to the previous quarter, pointing to a continued skills shortage as EVs and ADAS technology further increase demands.

Vehicle technician demand stays strong, pointing to a continued skills shortage as EVs and ADAS technology increase demands



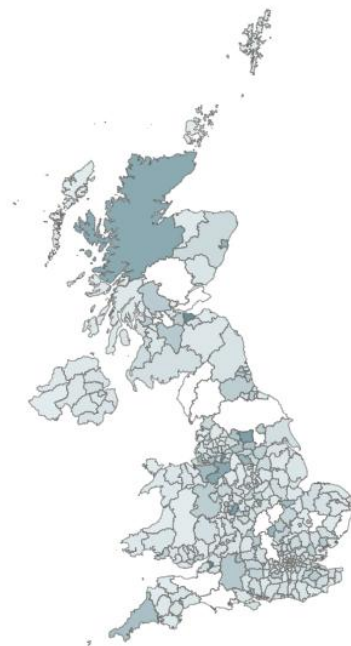
The proportional postings chart (postings per 100,000 employed) shows that technical roles dominate recruitment pressure. Technical demand outpaces customer-facing roles. Even after the decline, rates for other technical roles and vehicle technicians stand well above sales roles, indicating stronger recruitment activity in specialist and hands-on positions.

Overall, the data shows that headcount reductions have been largest in customer-facing and managerial roles, while employers continue to look hardest for people with technical expertise.

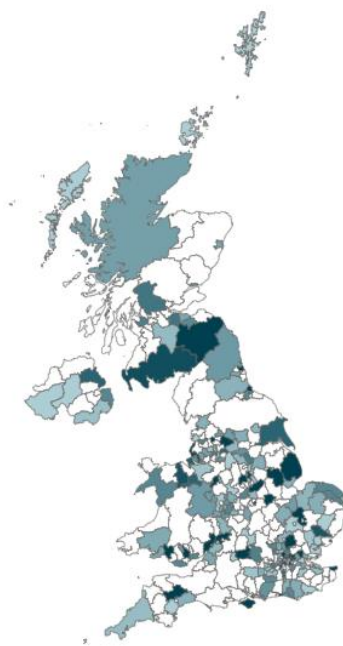


GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

Volume of job posts within automotive retail
6 months (Nov 2024 - April 2025)



Areas with an increase in job posts within automotive retail
April to Nov 2024 - April 2025

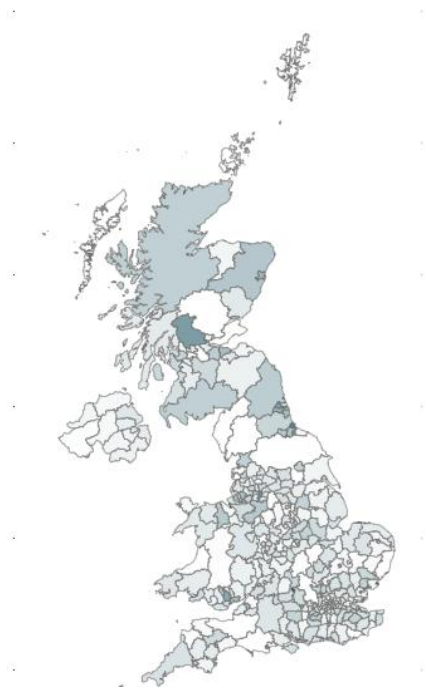


Areas with a decrease in job posts within automotive retail
April to Nov 2024 - April 2025



Average monthly posts per 1000 employed

Average posts between Nov 2024 - April 2025



Automotive retail

The heat maps display job postings across UK local authority areas over the past six months, both in total and per 1,000 people employed.

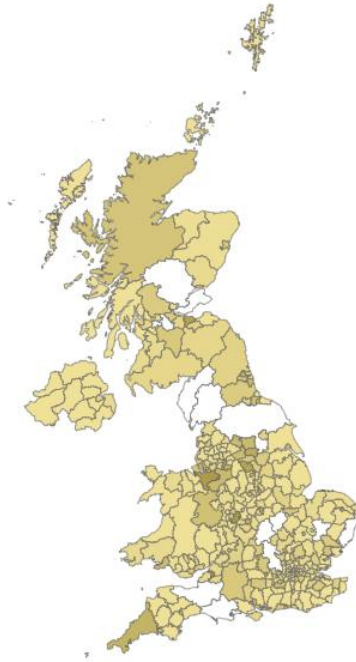
Job postings have risen in Scotland and Wales in the past month and fallen in England and Northern Ireland. Glasgow, Bristol, and Edinburgh show high posting volumes and elevated rates.

Glasgow records the most job postings overall, though its impact is smaller when adjusted for local automotive employment.

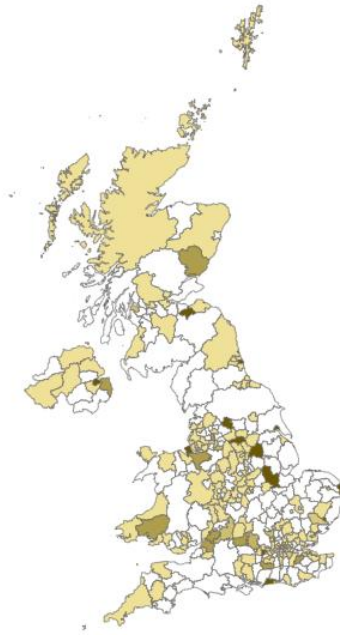
Notable increases include Calderdale, East Hertfordshire, and Wirral in England, as well as Stirling and West Lothian in Scotland, though some have low overall volumes.

Milton Keynes and Coventry, and Wakefield have seen declines despite being among the largest areas by volume.

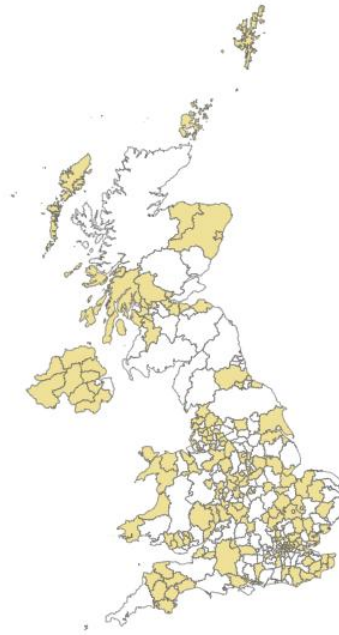
Volume of job posts for technical roles
6 months (Nov 2024 - April 2025)



Areas with an increase in job posts for
technical roles
April to Nov 2024 - April 2025

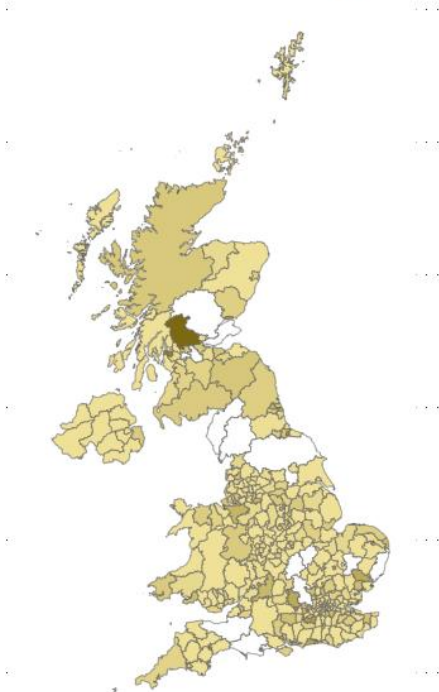


Areas with a decrease in job posts for
technical roles
April to Nov 2024 - April 2025



Average monthly posts per 1000
employed

Average posts between Nov 2024 - April 2025



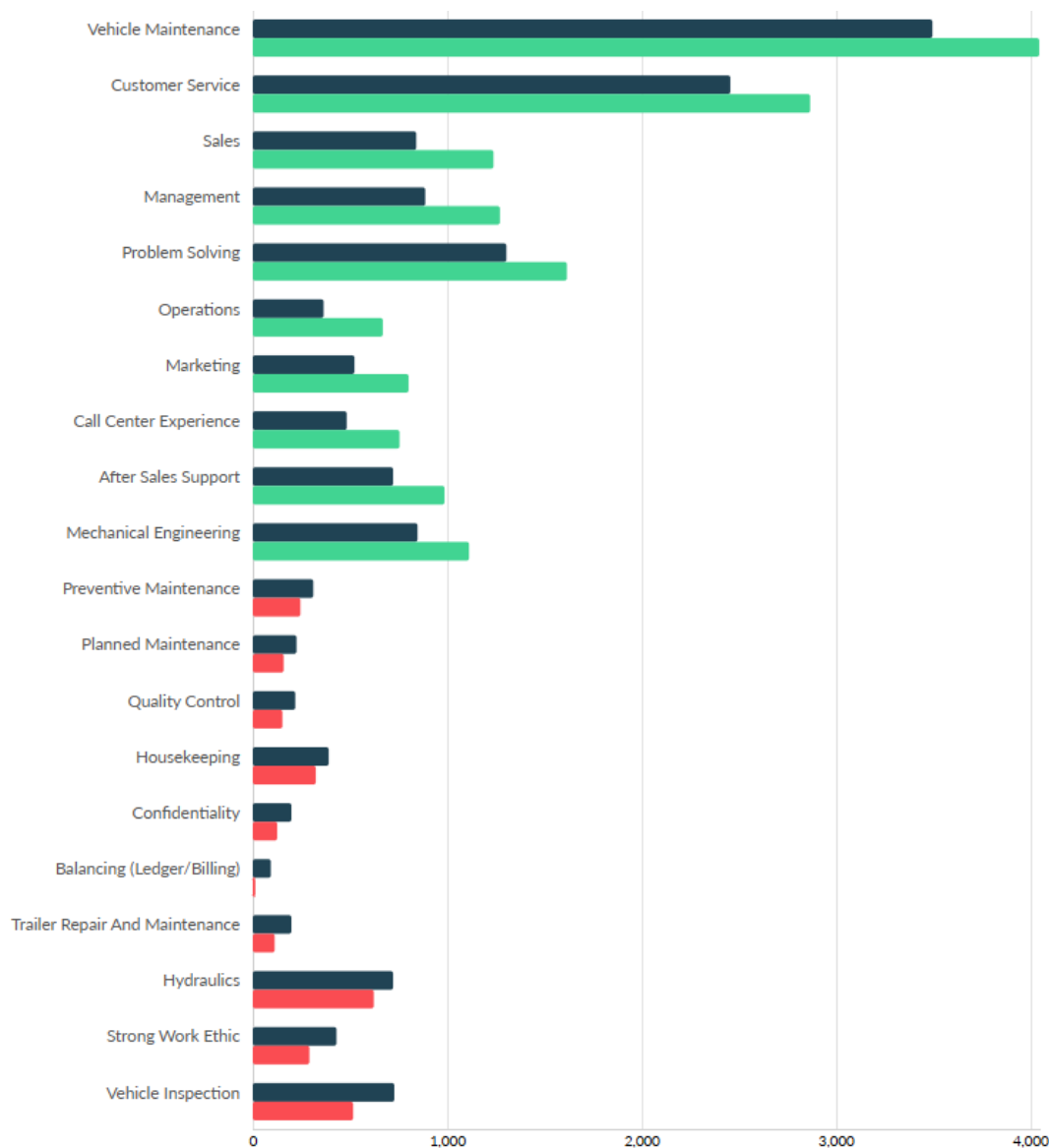
Automotive technical roles

Bristol and Birmingham stand out for their high volumes of technical job postings and elevated rates per 1,000 employed.

As with overall automotive retail postings, Bristol shows elevated rates of total job postings, though this impact lessens when adjusted for local automotive employment.

Technical job postings have increased in Scotland and England over the past month, with clusters continuing in Southern Scotland and emerging in Northern Scotland, as well as Northern and Southwest England.

TRENDING SKILLS IN TECHNICAL ROLES

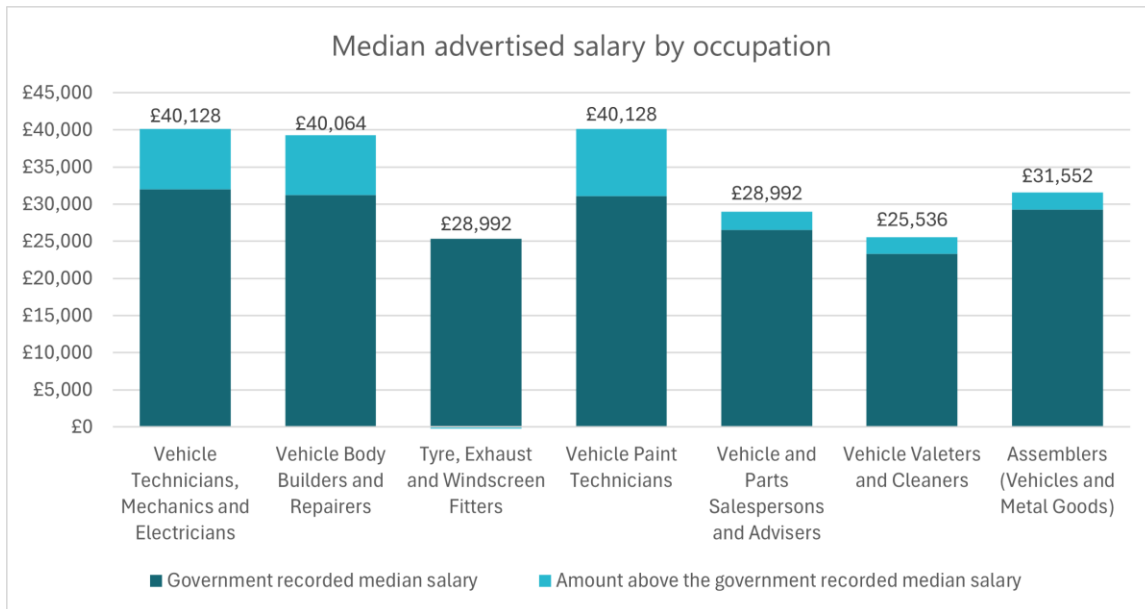


The green bars highlight the growing demand for vehicle maintenance, customer service, sales, and management skills. This suggests that even as automation and electrification accelerate, people-centric skills are now in the shortest supply.

Growth in EVs and ADAS is likely driving this demand by requiring more advanced diagnostics and systems analysis. In contrast, the red bars indicate a steady decline in vehicle inspection skills, emphasising a renewed focus on traditional mechanical servicing.

MEDIAN ADVERTISED SALARIES

OCCUPATIONS



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	£40,128	£2,560	7%	£4,608	13%
Vehicle Paint Technicians	£40,128	£0	0%	£2,816	8%
Vehicle Body Builders and Repairers	£40,064	£3,264	9%	£6,592	20%
Assemblers (Vehicles and Metal Goods)	£31,552	£3,456	12%	£4,736	18%
Tyre, Exhaust and Windscreen Fitters	£28,992	£2,112	8%	£3,968	16%
Vehicle and Parts Salespersons and Advisers	£28,992	£1,024	4%	£2,048	8%
Vehicle Valeters and Cleaners	£25,536	£512	2%	£2,688	12%

Vehicle technicians now have the highest advertised salaries in the sector and £2,560 above the government median – following a 13% increase over the past two years. This indicates that automotive employers may be raising pay to attract or retain staff in skilled, hands-on roles.

Other technical roles have seen even steeper growth. Salaries for assemblers rose by 18% over two years to £4,736 above the median, while vehicle body builders and repairers experienced a 20% rise, reaching £6,592 above the median. These sharp increases point to an acute shortage of panel-beating and body shop talent.

This growth suggests that employers are "catching up" on pay for roles that previously hovered in the low £30,000s, possibly preventing skilled workers from moving into other manufacturing sectors.

In contrast, advertised salaries for paint technicians have stayed static over the past year, despite sharing the £40,000 median. This may reflect earlier wage surges or a temporary balance between supply and demand, for instance, if training pipelines have improved.

Vehicle technicians have the highest advertised salaries at £40,128 – after a 13% increase over two years

Meanwhile, less technical roles such as vehicle salespersons and valeters saw only modest increases of 4% and 2%, respectively. These gains fall short of inflation, suggesting there is less pressure on employers to raise wages in areas where labour supply is sufficient.

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