

Inform Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire Economic Bulletin

Job Posting and Labour Market Trends

April 2026

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Executive Summary

Job Postings

Online job postings provide a timely indicator of employer demand and labour market conditions. Following the exceptionally high levels of recruitment activity seen during 2023, job postings have generally trended downward, although recent data suggests a period of relative stability.

Between January and March 2026, job postings increased across Gloucestershire before easing slightly in April. While demand remains below the levels recorded in 2023, there were still 14,746 unique job postings in April 2026, indicating ongoing recruitment activity across the county.

The relationship between job postings and unemployed claimants suggests that labour demand continues to exceed the number of people actively seeking work. In April 2026 there were approximately 1.4 job postings for every claimant in Gloucestershire, a ratio that remained above both the South West and England averages, although significant variation exists between districts.

Demand remains concentrated in higher-skilled occupations, particularly professional and associate professional roles, despite overall reductions in posting volumes since 2023. Recent trends show growth in areas such as business and public service professionals, education occupations and administrative roles, while some skilled trades occupations have experienced declines.

Skills data highlights continued demand for both technical and transferable skills. Employers most frequently sought skills relating to continuous improvement, auditing, finance, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), project management, communication and customer service, reflecting the importance of both specialist expertise and core employability skills across the local economy.

Job Density

Alongside continued recruitment activity, Gloucestershire maintained a relatively high concentration of employment opportunities, with job density remaining above both the regional and national averages in 2024.

Overall

The evidence suggests that Gloucestershire's labour market remains resilient, with recruitment activity continuing across a broad range of occupations and sectors, despite being at a lower level than the peak conditions observed in 2023.

Key takeaways:

- There were 14,746 unique job postings in Gloucestershire in April 2026.
- Although recruitment demand remains below the peak levels seen during 2023, recent trends suggest that job postings have stabilised following earlier declines.
- Between March and April 2026 Gloucestershire saw a larger decrease in job postings (-2.4%) than both the South West (-1.5%) and England (-1.2%).
- Gloucestershire recorded 1.4 job postings per claimant compared in April 2026, above the South West (1.2) and England (0.8), indicating a stronger balance between job opportunities and people seeking work.
- Labour demand varies across the county. Cotswold (2.3 postings per claimant) and Cheltenham (1.8) saw the highest ratio, while the Forest of Dean saw the lowest (0.5).
- Job postings data at the broad occupation level shows that Professional Occupations remained the largest occupational group in April 2026, accounting for over 3,400 job postings, despite seeing overall lower demand than in 2023.
- Recent year-on-year changes at the detailed occupation level were mixed. Between April 2025 and April 2026, postings increased in some groups, including Business, Media and Public Service professionals, Teaching and Educational professionals, Process, Plant and Machine Operatives, and Administrative Occupations, while other groups saw declines.
- Employers continue to seek a combination of specialist and transferable skills. Continuous improvement, auditing, finance, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), project management, communication and customer service were among the most frequently requested skills during the six months to April 2026.
- Job density in Gloucestershire remained above both the regional and national averages in 2024, suggesting a relatively strong concentration of employment opportunities within the county

Introduction

Background and context

Online job postings provide a timely measure of employer demand, offering valuable insights into changing labour market conditions. Unlike many official labour market statistics, which are published with a time lag, online job postings can help identify emerging trends in recruitment activity in near real-time.

This bulletin uses a range of data sources to examine labour market conditions in Gloucestershire, including online job postings data from Lightcast, claimant count data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and occupational and skills demand derived from job postings. The bulletin also looks at job density measures from ONS, which compares the number of available jobs with the size of the resident working age population.

Together, these data sources provide insight into employer demand, labour supply and the overall strength and structure of the local labour market.

About the data

Job postings data used within this bulletin is sourced from Lightcast and represents online recruitment activity captured from a range of job advertisement platforms. The data should be interpreted as an indicator of labour demand rather than a direct count of vacancies. Not all vacancies are advertised online and, while efforts are made to remove duplicate advertisements, some duplication may remain.

Occupational analysis is derived from online job postings and is based on the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system, allowing demand to be examined at both broad occupational groups and more detailed occupational categories.

Claimant count data is sourced from the Office for National Statistics through Nomis and includes individuals claiming Jobseeker's Allowance and those claiming Universal Credit who are required to seek work. Comparing job postings with claimant counts provides an indication of the balance between labour demand and labour supply.

Job density statistics are published by the Office for National Statistics. Job density measures the number of filled jobs relative to the resident working-age population and provides an indication of the concentration of employment opportunities within an area.

As with all labour market indicators, the measures presented should be interpreted alongside other economic evidence. Together, they provide insight into current labour market conditions, emerging recruitment trends, and changing demand for occupations and skills across Gloucestershire.

Job postings

Job postings are a useful indicator of employer demand, providing a timely view of recruitment activity. Looking at trends over time helps to understand how demand is changing across Gloucestershire and how this compares with the South West and England.

Recent trends in job postings

Figure 1 shows monthly job posting numbers across Gloucestershire's six districts from April 2023 to April 2026.

Gloucester and Cheltenham consistently account for the highest number of job postings, while Forest of Dean and Tewkesbury remain lower in comparison. This pattern has remained broadly unchanged over time. Over the past few months, trends have been mixed, with some short-term increases followed by a slight fall in the most recent month. Despite these changes, posting levels remain below those seen at the 2023 peak across all districts. The peak in recruitment activity seen locally was also reflected across the South West and England, indicating this was part of a wider regional and national trend, rather than unique to Gloucestershire.

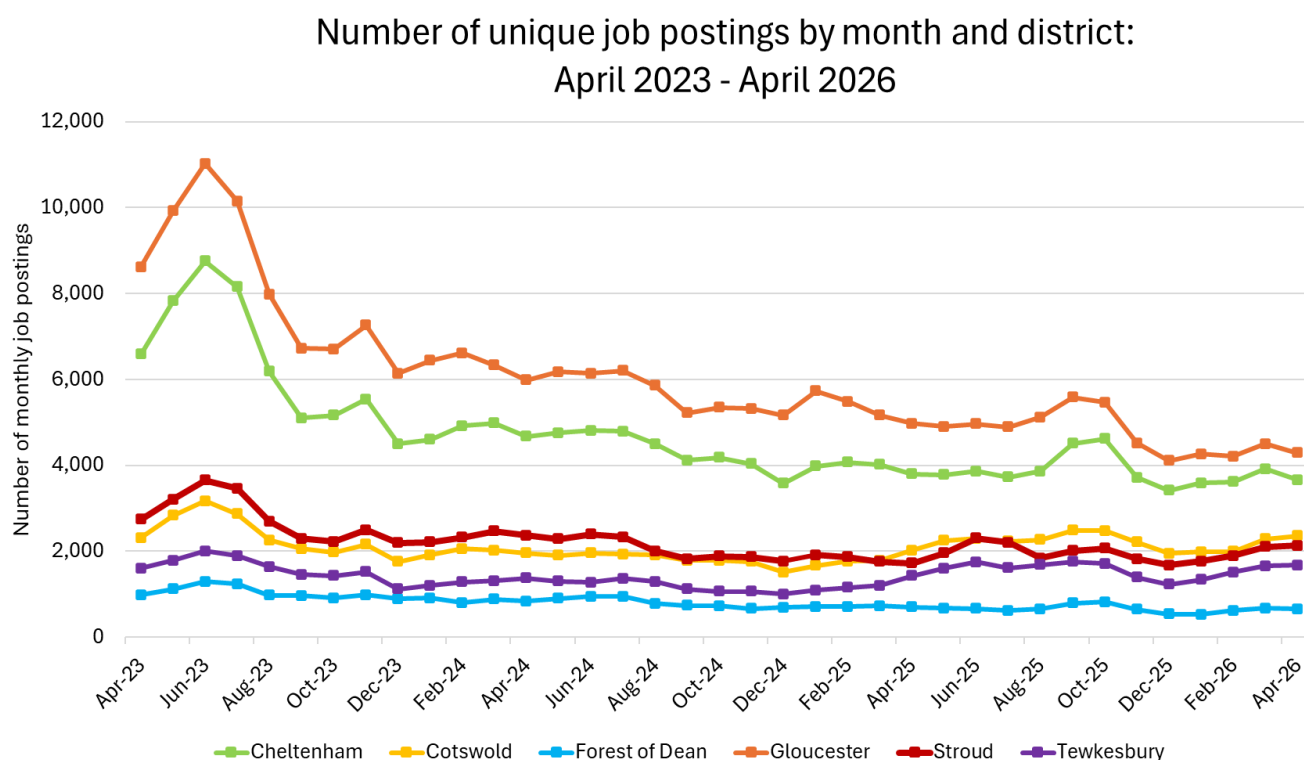


Figure 1: Number of unique job postings by month and district: April 2023 – April 2026¹

¹ Lightcast, 2026

Figure 2 below shows the month-on-month percentage change in total job postings across Gloucestershire, the South West and England for the past six months. Trends over recent months show some recovery in postings between January and March 2026. However, most areas saw declines in job postings between March and April 2026. Gloucestershire saw a larger month-on-month decrease (-2.4%) than both the South West (-1.5%) and England (-1.2%) between March and April 2026.

Month on month percentage (%) change in unique job postings												
Area	Oct - Nov		Nov - Dec		Dec - Jan		Jan - Feb		Feb - Mar		Mar - Apr	
Cheltenham	↓	-19.5%	↓	-8.2%	↑	5.3%	↑	0.7%	↑	8.2%	↓	-6.5%
Cotswold	↓	-10.9%	↓	-11.7%	↑	2.0%	↑	0.2%	↑	14.7%	↑	3.4%
Forest of Dean	↓	-21.3%	↓	-16.7%	↓	-1.9%	↑	17.9%	↑	7.6%	↓	-2.7%
Gloucester	↓	-17.2%	↓	-9.2%	↑	3.8%	↓	-1.2%	↑	6.8%	↓	-4.7%
Stroud	↓	-11.9%	↓	-7.9%	↑	5.4%	↑	7.2%	↑	11.1%	↑	1.3%
Tewkesbury	↓	-18.8%	↓	-11.7%	↑	8.6%	↑	13.3%	↑	9.3%	↑	1.0%
Gloucestershire	↓	-16.7%	↓	-9.7%	↑	4.4%	↑	2.8%	↑	9.2%	↓	-2.4%
South West	↓	-12.8%	↓	-8.9%	↑	3.5%	↑	0.3%	↑	10.2%	↓	-1.5%
England	↓	-11.5%	↓	-10.8%	↑	3.8%	↑	2.8%	↑	9.3%	↓	-1.2%

Figure 2: Month on month percentage (%) change in unique job postings²

Figure 3 below gives a district overview of the number of total job postings for the month of April 2026, comparing the same month from 2023 to 2026. Job posting numbers in April 2026 (green bars) were lower than previous years shown in Cheltenham, the Forest of Dean and Gloucester, while Cotswold, Stroud and Tewkesbury saw slightly higher numbers in April 2026 compared with April 2025.

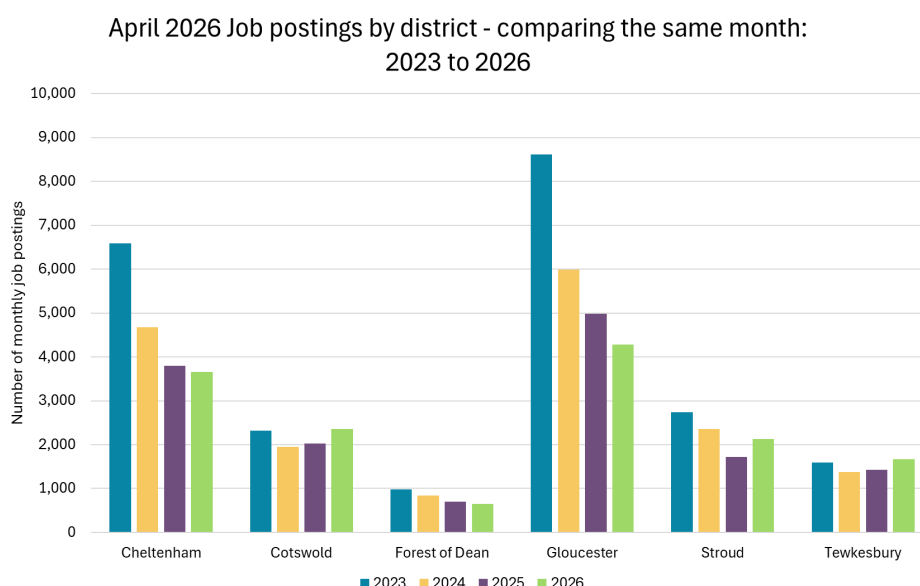


Figure 3: April 2026 job postings by district – comparing the same month: 2023 to 2026³

² Lightcast, 2026

³ Lightcast, 2026

Job postings and unemployed claimants

The Claimant Count (unemployed claimants) is a measure of the number of people who are unemployed and claiming benefits. In April 2026 there were 10,570 unemployed claimants in Gloucestershire and the rate was 2.6% (the value is expressed as a proportion of residents aged 16-64), this was lower than both the South West (2.8%) and England (4.0%). For more information on the claimant count, please refer to the Data, Analysis and Insights Team monthly publications [here](#).

By looking at job postings alongside claimants, it's possible to see the balance between labour demand (available vacancies) and labour supply (people seeking work). Higher ratios suggest a greater demand for workers, while lower ratios indicate fewer opportunities relative to the number of claimants.

Figure 4 below shows the ratio of job postings to unemployed claimants in April 2026. Across Gloucestershire there were approximately 1.4 job postings for every claimant, this was above both the South West (1.2) and England (0.8) averages. While the overall ratio remains above 1.0, indicating more vacancies than claimants at county level, there is variation between districts:

- Cotswold saw the highest ratio (2.3), suggesting a greater number of job postings compared to the number of people claiming unemployment-related benefits. Cheltenham also recorded a higher ratio (1.8), indicating a strong demand for workers.
- In contrast, the Forest of Dean saw a ratio of 0.5, which was the lowest in the county, indicating fewer job postings relative to the number of claimants.
- Gloucester and Stroud both saw ratios of 1.4, broadly in line with the county average, while Tewkesbury was slightly lower at 1.2.

These differences highlight variation in the balance between job availability and the number of people seeking work across Gloucestershire. It is also worth noting that there will likely be people unemployed and not claiming benefits, as a result these individuals will not be captured in the claimant count figures and job posting ratios.

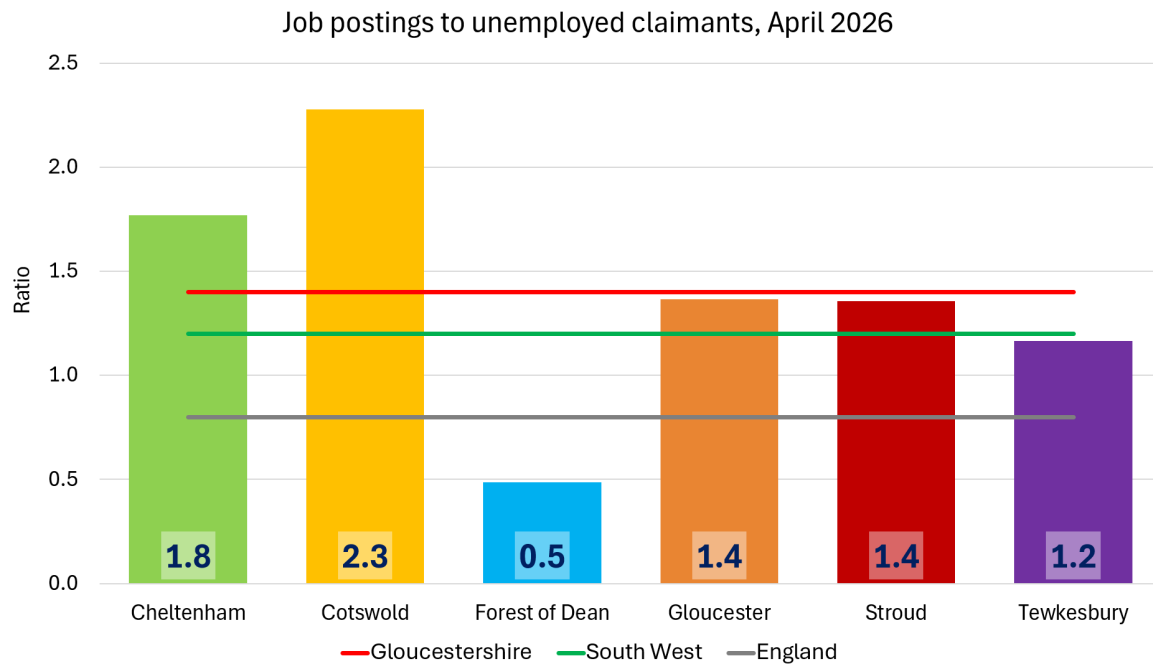


Figure 4: Job postings to unemployed claimants, April 2026⁴

Figure 5 below shows the ratio of job postings to unemployed claimants from April 2023 to April 2026, highlighting a decline from the 2023 peak, reflecting the overall trend seen in job postings. It is worth noting, however, that throughout the period, Gloucestershire has consistently seen more vacancies than claimants. This rate has been broadly in line with the South West, while England has seen more claimants than vacancies.

There has been some variation across the county, with some districts maintaining higher ratios than others, particularly Cheltenham and Cotswold. Conversely, the Forest of Dean has consistently seen the lowest rate compared to other Gloucestershire districts and is the only district in the county which regularly has less vacancies than claimants. This highlights the differing local labour market conditions, with stronger demand for workers in some areas, relative to the number of people claiming unemployment related benefits.

⁴ Lightcast, 2026 and ONS (Nomis)

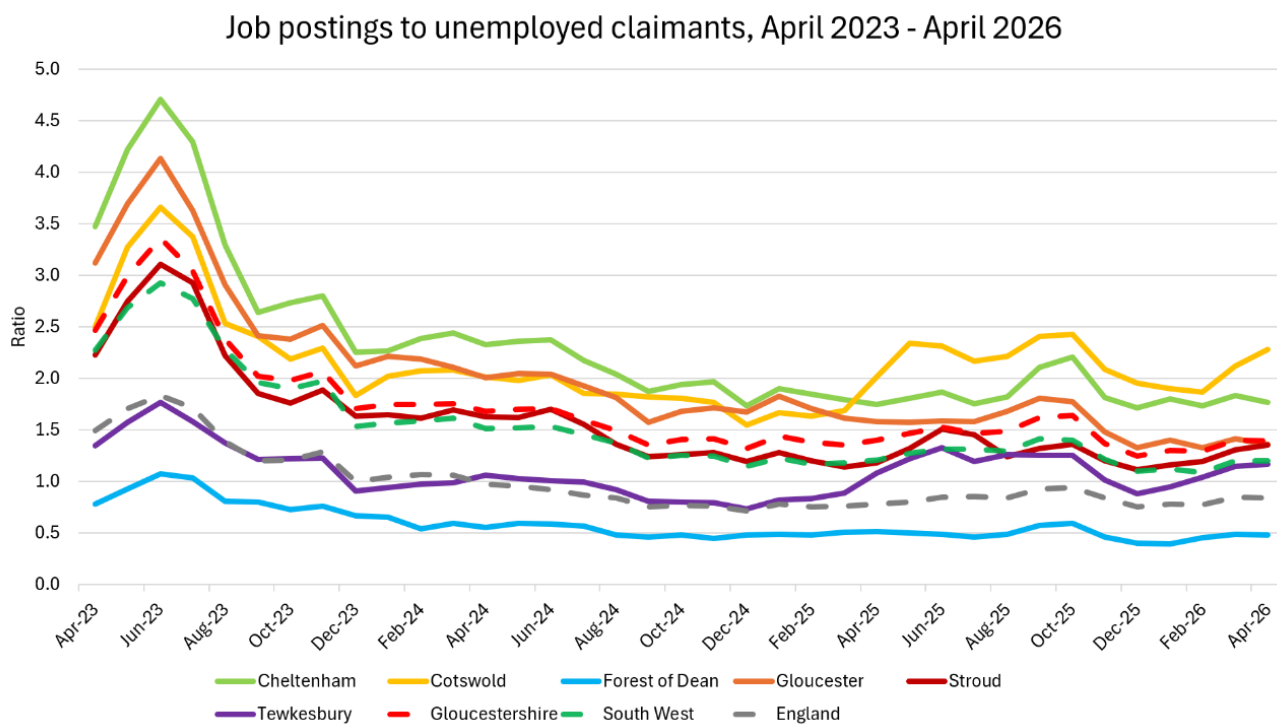


Figure 5: Job postings to unemployed claimants, April 2023 – April 2026⁵

⁵ Lightcast, 2026 and ONS (Nomis)

Occupational demand

This section looks at patterns of occupational demand in Gloucestershire using online job postings data, providing insight into how employer demand is distributed across different types of work. Occupations are analysed using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC), allowing comparison across both broad (1-digit) and detailed (2-digit) groups.

Understanding occupational demand helps to interpret how the structure of the labour market is changing over time, including whether demand is concentrated in higher-skilled, professional roles or more routine and service-based occupations, and how this aligns with the wider employment profile of the county.

Broad occupation groups (1-digit SOC)

Higher-skilled occupations account for a significant share of recruitment demand in Gloucestershire. In April 2026, Professional Occupations accounted for almost a quarter of all unique job postings, with 3,441 postings, representing 23% of the total. This was followed by Associate Professional Occupations, which accounted for a further 14% (2,119 postings). Together, these two occupation groups accounted for around 37% of all online job postings. Elementary Occupations (12%), Sales and Customer Service Occupations (9%) and Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations (8%) were also significant areas of recruitment demand.

Figure 6 below shows the number of unique job postings by broad occupation group in April 2023, April 2024, April 2025 and April 2026, together with the percentage change over both the three-year period (April 2023 to April 2026) and the most recent year (April 2025 to April 2026).

The monthly trend bars show the postings for each occupation group between April 2023 and April 2026. Green bars indicate the highest monthly posting volumes (peaks), while red bars indicate the lowest monthly volumes (troughs) for each occupation over the period shown. Across the occupations shown in the graph, the largest numbers can be seen earlier in the time series, with all occupations reaching their highest levels around mid-2023 (including the overall peak in June 2023).

Compared with April 2023, job posting numbers have decreased across all broad occupation groups. It is worth noting, however, that 2023 was a period of record job posting numbers, overall postings decreased by 35% between April 2023 and April 2026, from 22,834 to 14,746. Although all occupations have seen a decrease, the level of change varies across occupations as shown below.

Some of the largest decreases since April 2023 can be seen in:

- Administrative and Secretarial occupations (-51%)
- Professional occupations (-37%)
- Sales and Customer Service occupations (-37%)
- Skilled Trades occupations (-36%)

In contrast, smaller decrease can be seen in:

- Process, Plant and Machine Operatives (-22%)
- Elementary occupations (-27%)
- Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations (-30%)

The April 2025 to April 2026 comparison shows a more mixed recent picture. While total postings increased slightly over the year (+1%), some occupation groups saw greater growth, including Managers, Directors and Senior Officials (+11%), Administrative and Secretarial Occupations (+10%) and Process, Plant and Machine Operatives (+9%). In contrast, Skilled Trades Occupations (-17%), Elementary Occupations (-9%) and Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations (-2%) saw further declines.

Vacancies by broad occupation	Apr 2023 Unique Postings	Apr 2024 Unique Postings	Apr 2025 Unique Postings	Apr 2026 Unique Postings	% change Apr '23 - Apr '26	% change Apr '25 - Apr '26	Monthly trend between Apr '23 - Apr '26
Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	1,728	1,220	1,053	1,165	-33%	11%	
Professional Occupations	5,503	4,182	3,289	3,441	-37%	5%	
Associate Professional Occupations	3,265	2,500	2,139	2,119	-35%	-1%	
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	2,280	1,377	1,005	1,110	-51%	10%	
Skilled Trades Occupations	1,707	1,270	1,311	1,084	-36%	-17%	
Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations	1,756	1,398	1,259	1,237	-30%	-2%	
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	2,077	1,606	1,249	1,307	-37%	5%	
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	1,504	1,120	1,078	1,175	-22%	9%	
Elementary Occupations	2,472	2,117	1,996	1,815	-27%	-9%	
Total Across All Occupations	22,834	17,185	14,645	14,746	-35%	1%	

Figure 6: Net change in active unique job postings by broad one-digit occupation code (SOC), April 2023 – April 2026⁶

This highlights both long-term and short-term variation in occupational demand, with more detailed changes explored in the following section.

⁶ Lightcast, 2026

Detailed occupation groups (2-digit SOC)

At the more detailed 2-digit occupation level, demand in April 2026 was spread across a range of these occupation groups. That largest number of unique job postings was seen in:

- Elementary Administration and Service Occupations (1,646 postings, accounting for 11% of all postings)
- Business, Media and Public Service Professionals (1,188 postings, 8%)
- Sales Occupations (1,019 postings, 7%)
- Business and Public Service Associate Professionals (993 postings, 7%)
- Science, Research, Engineering and Technology Professionals (986 postings, 7%)
- Caring Personal Service Occupations (966 postings, 7%)

Together, these six occupation groups accounted for just under half of all unique job postings in April 2026.

Figure 7 shows the net change in active unique job postings by detailed occupation group between April 2025 and April 2026, expressed in absolute terms. This provides a recent year-on-year view of changes within occupations at a more detailed (2-digit SOC) level.

This shows that some of the largest increases over this period can be seen in:

- Business, Media and Public Service professionals (+181 postings, +18%), which saw the largest increase in absolute terms
- Process, Plant and Machine Operatives (+84 postings, +16%)
- Administrative occupations (+85 postings, +11%)
- Teaching and Educational professionals (+75 postings, +11%)

In contrast, the largest decreases can be seen in:

- Skilled Metal, Electrical and Electronic trades (-176 postings, -28%), representing the largest proportional decline
- Elementary Administration and Service occupations (-134 postings, -8%), despite remaining one of the larger occupation groups
- Health professionals (-88 postings, -15%)
- Business and Public Service associate professionals (-77 postings, -7%)
- Skilled Construction and Building trades (-66 postings, -26%)

Overall, these patterns show that changes at the detailed occupation level are not uniform, with both increases and decreases observed across different parts of the labour market.

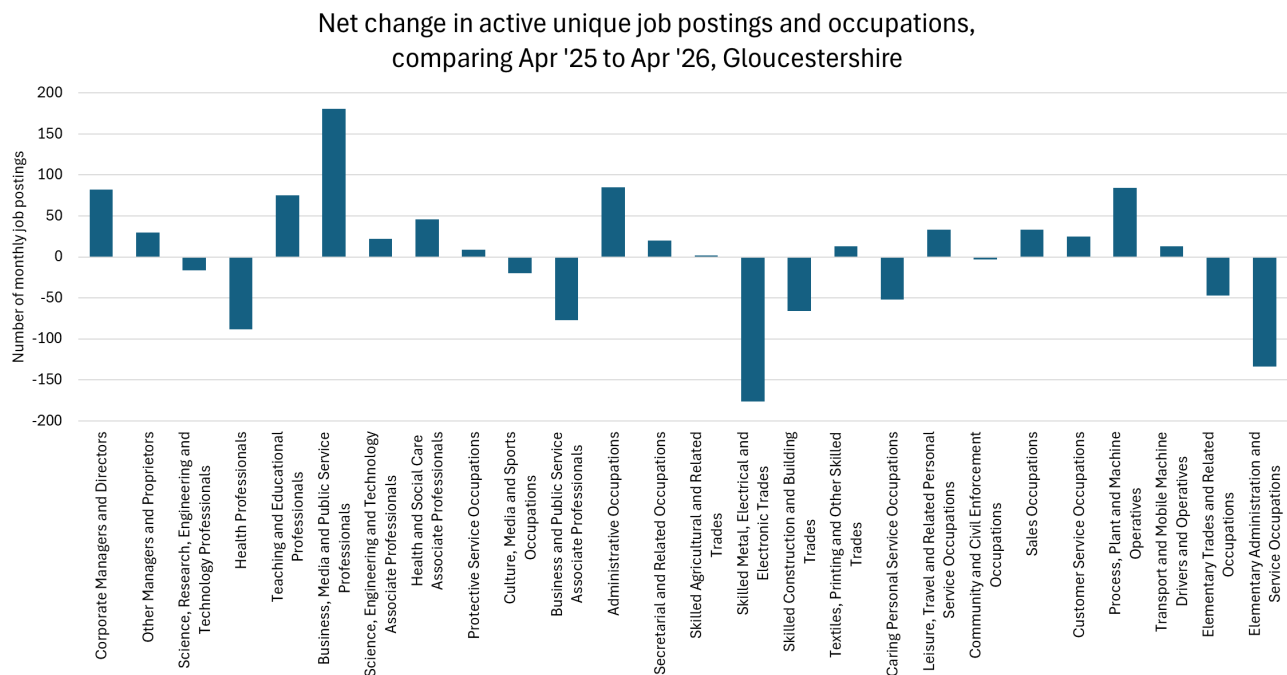


Figure 7: Net change in active unique job postings by two-digit occupation code (SOC), April '25 to April '26⁷

⁷ Lightcast, 2026

Skills in demand

Job vacancy data can also be broken down to identify skills in demand. This information can help to identify emerging skills required as the labour market evolves or identify skills gaps. Skills can be broken down into specialised skills or generic skills.

Specialised skills

Figure 8 looks at the top 20 specialised skills in demand from job postings, looking at the last six months from November 2025 to April 2026. During this time specialised skills in demand included Continuous Improvement Process, Auditing, Finance, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Project Management.

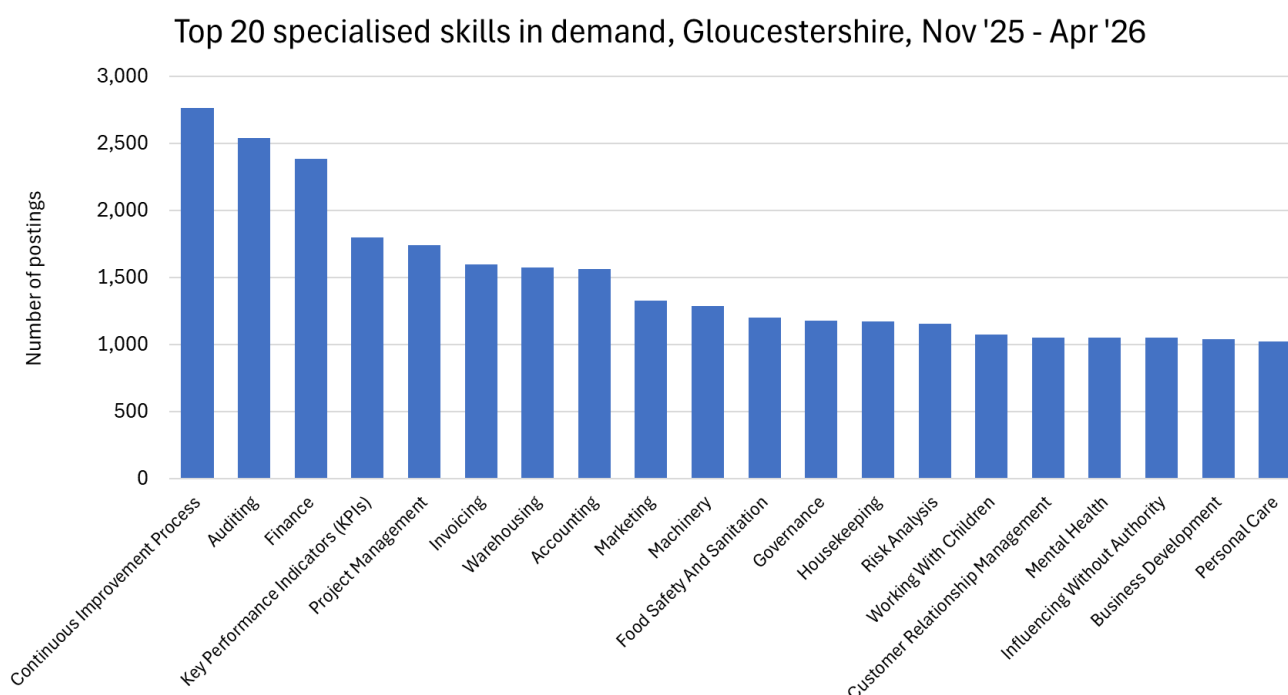


Figure 8: Top 20 specialised skills in demand, Gloucestershire, Nov '25 - Apr '26⁸

Note that a job posting can contain more than one skill.

⁸ Lightcast, 2026

Common skills

Figure 9 looks at the top 20 common skills in demand from job postings, looking at the last six months from November 2025 to April 2026. During this time common skills in demand included Communication, Customer Service, Detail Oriented, Management and Sales

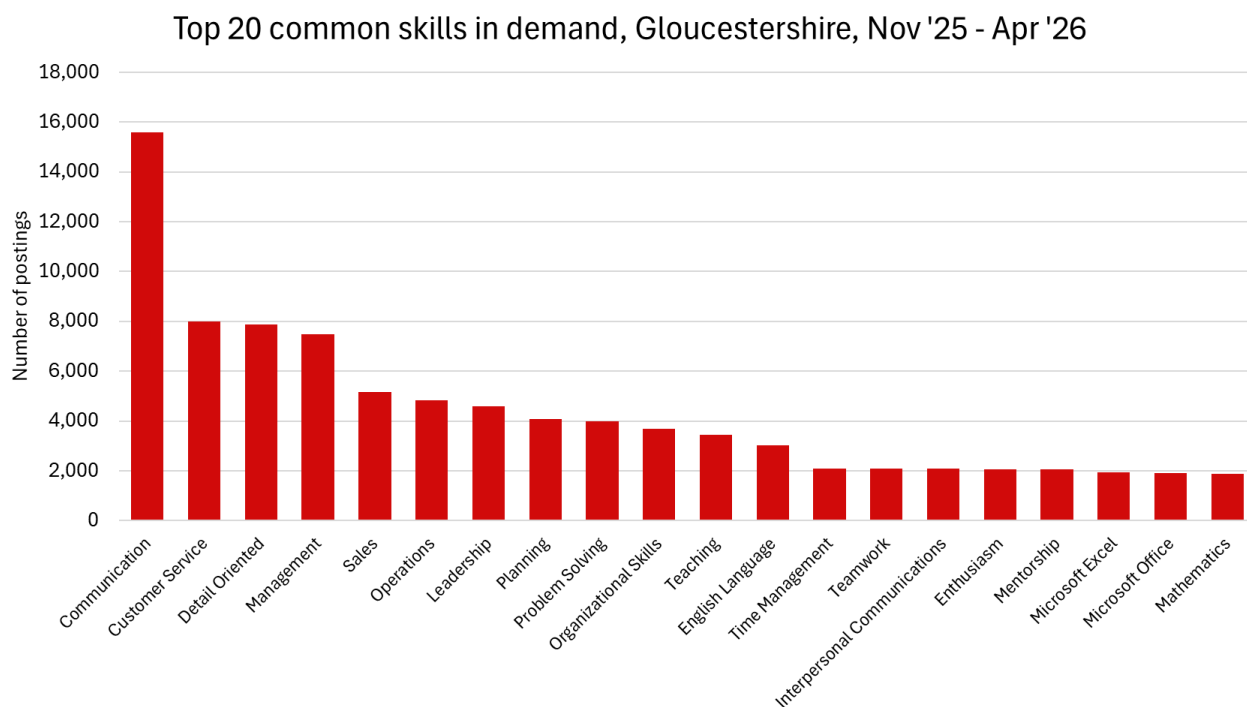


Figure 9: Top 20 common skills in demand, Gloucestershire, Nov '25 - Apr '26⁹

Note that a job posting can contain more than one skill.

⁹ Lightcast, 2026

Job density

Job density is an estimation of the overall balance between jobs and people. It is defined as the number of filled jobs in an area divided by the number of people of working age resident in that area. A job density of 1.0 would mean that there is one job for every resident of working age.

Traditionally, high job density has been seen as an asset, suggesting an area has a strong employment centre that may attract people from outside of the area to work. However, more recently it has been recognised as a potential challenge, highlighting areas that may have recruitment issues.

Latest figures show that in 2024 Gloucestershire had a job density of 0.90, this was slightly higher than both the regional average (0.88) and national average (0.86).

Figure 10 below compares job density across Gloucestershire's districts, alongside the Gloucestershire, regional and national rates for comparison in 2024.

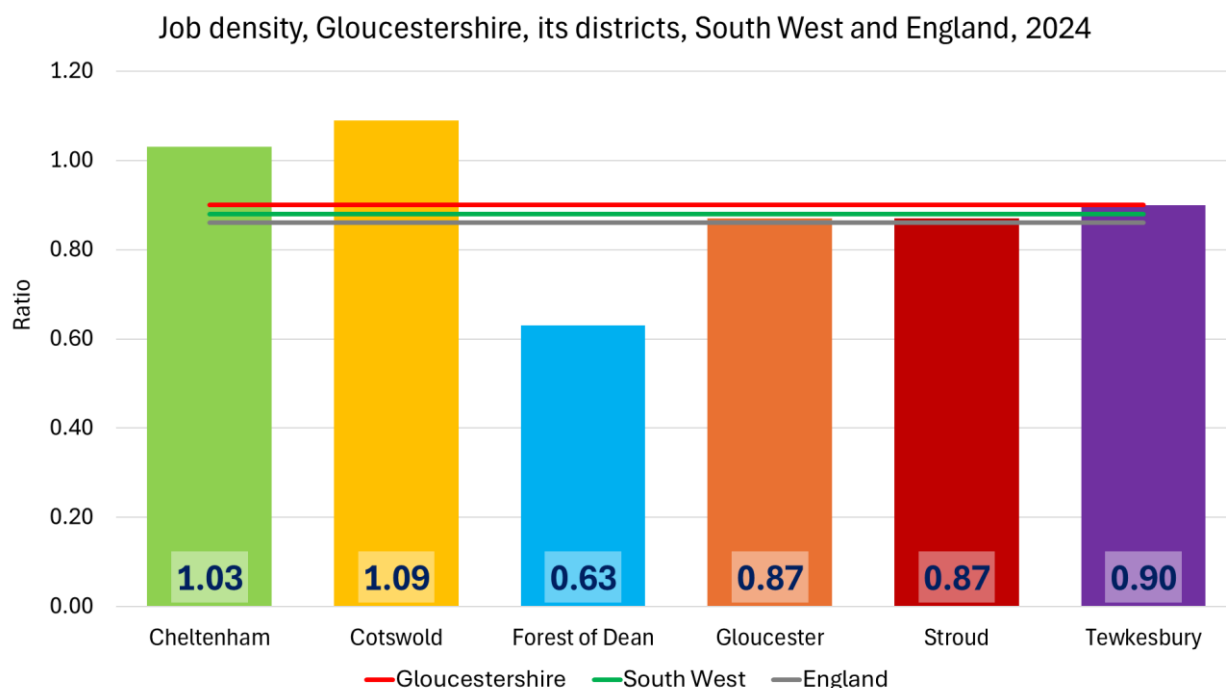


Figure 10: Job density, Gloucestershire, its districts, South West and England, 2024¹⁰

Job density varies across Gloucestershire's districts, with both higher and lower ratios seen relative to the county, regional and national averages.

¹⁰ Job Density, ONS

Cotswold has the highest job density among Gloucestershire districts at 1.09, followed by Cheltenham at 1.03, both above the county average of 0.90 and the South West and England averages of 0.88 and 0.86 respectively. Tewkesbury is in line with the county average at 0.90, while Gloucester and Stroud, both at 0.87, are close to both regional and national averages. The Forest of Dean stands out with a notably lower job density of 0.63.

Overall, job density is below 1.0 in most districts, indicating that there are fewer jobs than working-age residents. In contrast, Cotswold and Cheltenham both saw ratios above 1.0, suggesting a higher concentration of jobs relative to the resident working-age population.

Figure 11 shows that job density in Gloucestershire remained relatively stable between 2020 and 2024, with some variation between 0.87 and 0.91 over the period.

Gloucestershire has generally tracked close to the South West average, matching it in 2021 and 2022, and sitting slightly above it in 2020, 2023 and 2024. It has remained slightly above the England average throughout. Cotswold and Cheltenham consistently recorded a higher job density than the county average, with Cotswold remaining the highest district across the period. Tewkesbury peaked at 1.02 in 2022 but has since dipped to 0.90 in 2024, while Forest of Dean remained the lowest district throughout and saw a small decline in the last year, falling from 0.69 in 2023 to 0.63 in 2024.

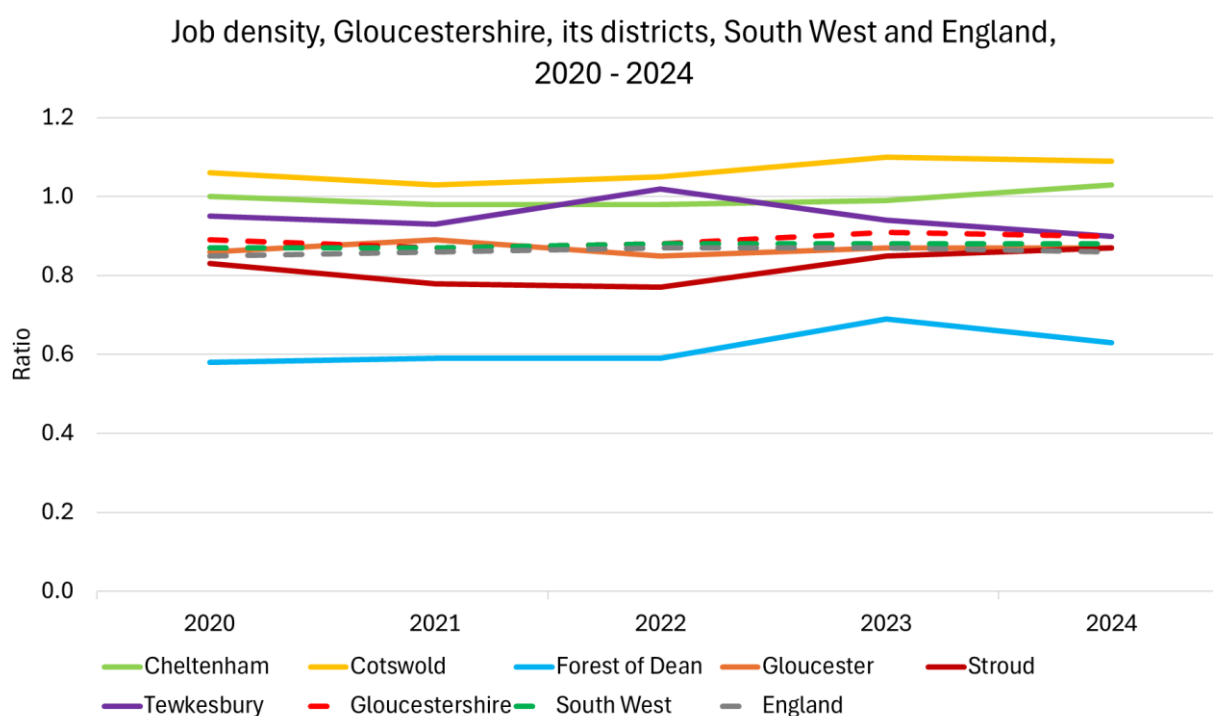


Figure 11: Job density, Gloucestershire, its districts, South West and England, 2020 - 2024¹¹

¹¹ Job Density, ONS