

Introduction

This Working Knowledge bulletin is produced for careers advisers by the research team at Skillfast-UK, the Sector Skills Council for fashion and textiles.

The purpose of the bulletin is to give you a picture of recruitment trends in fashion and textiles recruitment over the previous quarter – in this issue, we cover April, May and June 2009.

In Working Knowledge there are three main sections:

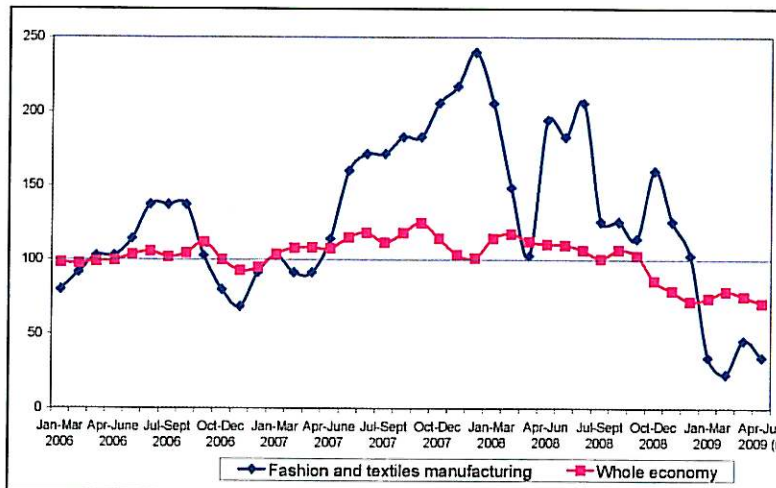
1. A picture of overall vacancy trends in the manufacturing side of the sector, compared to the wider economy, drawing on Office of National Statistics data
2. A profile of the type and location of vacancies in the manufacturing/service side of the sector, drawing on Jobcentre data
3. A picture of recruitment trends in fashion, drawing on our own research into vacancies advertised in the trade press.

1. Overall vacancy trends in fashion and textiles manufacturing

During Quarter 2 2009 (April, May, June), recruitment on the manufacturing side of the UK fashion and textiles industry appears to have been hit hard by recession, compared with the economy as a whole.

On average, there were only 300 vacancies a month in the period – a fall of over 80 per cent compared with the same quarter in 2008. By contrast, the wider economy experienced a smaller decline of 36 per cent.

The number of vacancies per 100 employees has also fallen from 1.7 vacancies per 100 employees in quarter 2 2008, to just 0.3 vacancies per 100 employees in quarter 2 this year. This compares with a current average for the wider economy of 1.6.



Index of UK vacancies

Three month rolling average: not seasonally adjusted; 2006=100

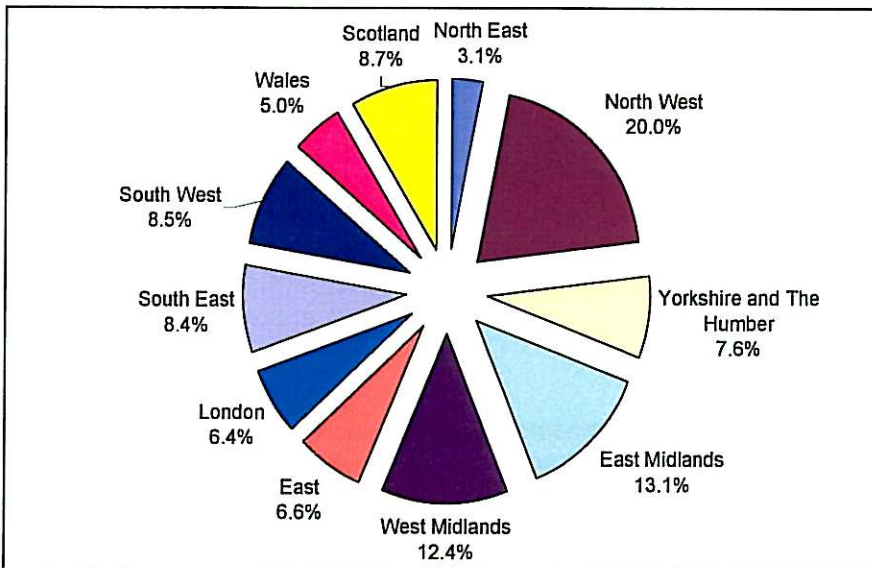
Source: Office of National Statistics Vacancy Survey

The survey examines overall level of vacancies within sector companies and across the wider economy. The data are drawn from a monthly survey of enterprises which asks employers how many job vacancies they have in total, for which they are actively seeking recruits from outside their organisation.

Regional split of Jobcentre vacancies

As the graph shows, fashion and textiles vacancies have been recorded across all of Great Britain.

The North West of England is the top-ranking area, as is usually the case, but accounts for only 20 per cent of total vacancies. The ranking of the other regions tends to vary significantly each quarter.



Profile of vacancies in sector-specific occupations by region

Vacancies notified to Great Britain Jobcentres; Quarter 2 2009 – April to June inclusive

Source: Nomis

3. Fashion vacancies

Each quarter, Skillfast-UK produces an analysis of the vacancies published in the leading fashion industry trade magazine "Drapers". By looking closely at the types of post advertised, the skills requested and the location of the vacancies, we can give a picture of recruitment trends in the fashion sector, and in particular fashion design and higher-level fashion jobs, which tend not to be advertised through Jobcentres.

In quarter 2 of 2009 (April, May, June), a total of 101 relevant vacancies were logged. This is almost twice the level of 54 recorded in the previous quarter. However, recruitment is slightly down compared with the same period in 2008 (124 vacancies), and it is still too early to say whether we are seeing the start of any kind of sustained upturn in recruitment.



The most advertised job category in the quarter was “design”, which accounted for more than one-third of advertised opportunities. This broad category relates to a wide range of roles and levels, from design assistant to senior designer and design director.

The **wholesale** category accounted for just under one-third of advertised opportunities. This category incorporates a range of sales roles which typically involve interaction with retailers on behalf of a fashion and textiles supplier. Job titles include sales manager, sales executive and account manager. These roles usually require market awareness and in some instances a degree of technical knowledge.

Around one in seven vacancies were for **garment technologists**, a key technical function that is crucial to the effective translation of designs into the finished product.

Just under one-tenth of vacancies fall within the broad category of **production and quality** roles, including production manager, technical manager, production assistant and quality controller. In many cases these roles involve the co-ordination of overseas supply chains, reflecting the global nature of the industry. Hands-on production roles, such as sample machinist and tailor are also included within this category.

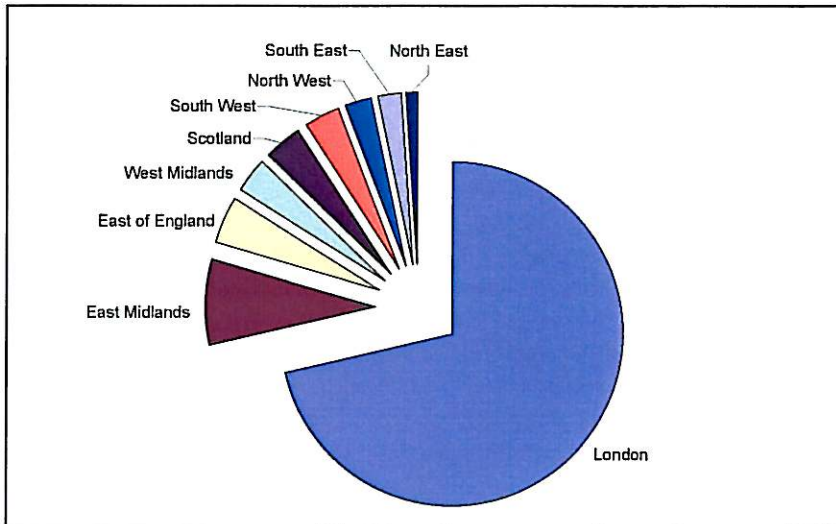
The specialist role of **pattern cutter** is a regular feature each quarter, accounting for around one in twenty vacancies in quarter 2. This is a crucial role in the pre-production process which combines creative and technical dimensions, and skilled applicants are known to be in short supply. We also include pattern graders within this category.

The following table ranks the top 10 core job titles by the number of vacancies recorded. This is broken down by consolidated job title as some areas, most notably design, incorporate such a diverse range of specific job titles that it is not sensible to rank them individually. A comparison of the rankings from previous bulletins shows a degree of consistency: the role of designer regularly finishing at number one and sales person at number two, for example.

The roles of marketing manager, quality controller and sourcing manager did not feature in the previous quarter's top ten but have all have been in the top 10 prior to that. The role of administrator is featured in the top 10 for the first time. The specific jobs covered by this consolidated category mainly relate to sales support roles.

| Job title | Category | Ranking in previous quarter |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Designer | Designer | 1 |
| 2. Garment technologist | Garment technologist | 6 |
| 3. Sales person | Wholesale | 2 |
| 4. Pattern cutter | Pattern cutter | 4 |
| 5. Administrator | Finance / admin | - |
| 6. Agent | Wholesale | 3 |
| 7. Account manager | Wholesale | 5 |
| 8. Marketing manager | Marketing | - |
| 9. Quality controller | Production / Quality | - |
| 10. Sourcing manager | Production / Quality | - |

Vacancy analysis: top 10 jobs; quarter 2 2009; Source: Drapers



Profile of fashion vacancies by UK Nation and English region

Quarter 2 2009 – April to June inclusive

Source: *Drapers*

Around one in 20 vacancies were for overseas positions, which is consistent with the level seen in most previous quarters. Because of the low total number of vacancies this quarter this equates to only a handful of opportunities.

Further information on fashion and textiles careers

Skillfast-UK provides a range of online resources to support fashion and textiles career choice.

www.skillfast-uk.org/careers

Provides job profiles for the sector as a whole, plus a course search facility

www.canucutit.co.uk

Provides job profiles and information on fashion design and related roles

www.techtextiles.co.uk

Provides job profiles and information on technical textiles – a growing area of the industry that focuses on fabrics that are important for their performance, rather than their appearance, and that are used in a range of markets, from aerospace to medical science.