

Forestry Statistics 2020

Chapter 7: Employment & Businesses

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Introduction

This chapter contains information on:

- employment in forestry and wood processing;
- health & safety; and
- numbers of businesses.

All of the statistics presented in this chapter relate to UK totals. Further information on the data sources and methodology used to compile the figures is provided in the Sources chapter.

Most of the statistics presented in this chapter have been previously released. Some of the figures in this chapter have been revised since Forestry Statistics 2019. For further details on revisions, see the Employment section of the Sources chapter.

A copy of all Employment & Businesses tables can be accessed in spreadsheet format from the Data Downloads web page at www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/data-downloads/.

Key findings

The main findings are:

- The Annual Business Survey (May 2020) reported average employment¹ in 2018 of 16 thousand in forestry, 10 thousand in sawmilling and 6 thousand in panel mills.
- There was estimated to be a total of 7.3 thousand full time equivalent staff employed¹ by primary wood processors in the UK in 2019, a 4% decrease from the total for 2018.
- Accident rates in forestry and wood products have tended to decline in recent years but are still higher than the averages in agriculture and manufacturing respectively.
- There were 204 establishments in the primary wood processing industries in the UK using UK-grown roundwood in 2019.

¹ There are a number of differences in the scope of the employment figures reported from the Annual Business Survey (ABS) and the full time equivalent figures obtained from the annual surveys of the UK timber industry run by Forest Research (FR). In particular, the ABS figures cover employment by all businesses in the relevant sectors that pay VAT and/ or PAYE. This will include businesses that do not use UK grown timber. The FR surveys include businesses below the VAT and PAYE thresholds, but exclude businesses that do not use UK grown timber.

7.1 Employment: Annual Business Survey (ABS)

The Annual Business Survey (ABS), carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), includes statistics on employment broken down by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC 2007). In wood processing, SIC 16 (wood products) and SIC 17 (pulp, paper and paper products) have a much wider scope than the data on employment in primary wood processing (Table 7.2a), as they include primary processing of imported material and also some secondary processing.

The latest ABS survey was published in May 2020 and includes data to 2018. It recorded average employment in 2018 of 16 thousand in forestry, 10 thousand in sawmilling and 6 thousand in panel mills (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Employment in forestry and wood processing², 2014-2018

	thousands				
Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)¹	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Forestry	16	17	17	16	16
Wood products					
Sawmilling	9	8	9	9	10
Panels	5	5	5	5	6
Secondary products	65	56	67	60	73
Total	79	69	81	74	89
Pulp, paper & paper products	57	56	56	55	62

Source: Annual Business Survey - average employment in year (Office for National Statistics, May 2020)

Notes:

1. Categories are based on the [UK Standard Industrial Classification \(SIC 2007\)](#) categories. Further details on the SIC codes used are provided in the Sources: Employment and businesses page.
2. Excludes other wood-using industries.
3. Pulp, paper & paper products breakdowns for all years have been suppressed in the figures released by ONS. Data produced by the Confederation of Paper Industries, presenting estimates on a different basis are provided in table 7.2b.

7.2 Employment in primary wood processing

Information on employment in primary wood processing is obtained annually via the sources used to collect data on UK-grown timber (presented in Chapter 2).

There was estimated to be a total of 7.3 thousand full time equivalent staff employed by primary wood processors in the UK in 2019 (Table 7.2a), a 4% decrease from the total for 2018.

Over one half (57%) of the total employment in 2019 worked in sawmills and over one quarter (29%) worked in wood-based panel mills.

Table 7.2a Employment in primary wood processing, 2015-2019
full-time equivalents

Year	Sawmills	Pulp & paper	Wood-based panels	Fencing	Total
2015	4,310	702	2,100	361	7,474
2016	4,434	697	2,250	388	7,769
2017	4,577	700	2,110	405	7,792
2018	4,310	693	2,175	399	7,577
2019	4,118	663	2,075	397	7,253

Source: industry surveys, industry associations.

Notes:

1. Some businesses operate sawmills and round fencing mills. Employment for such businesses may be recorded under sawmills, round fencing manufacturers or shared between the two categories.

Table 7.2b presents the estimated total number of direct employees at all UK paper and board mills. Direct employment fell by 13% from 2014 to 2015, and has fluctuated between 7.8 thousand and 8.0 thousand since then.

Table 7.2b Direct employment in paper and board mills, 2014-2019
number of employees

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Direct employees	9,170	7,970	7,911	7,849	7,939	7,860

Source: Confederation of Paper Industries.

Notes:

1. Figures exclude contractors, self-employed and employees at ancillary sites.
2. Covers all mills producing paper in the UK. This differs from the employment data in table 7.2a, which is restricted to mills using UK grown roundwood.

7.3 Health & safety

Accidents involving absence from work of at least seven days are required to be reported to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). Prior to this time, reporting was required for absences of at least three days.

The latest major accident rates for Great Britain, covering 2018-19, show levels similar to 2017-18 rates for both forestry and the wood products sector. Over the longer term, the rates for both sectors have generally declined, but they continue to remain higher than the averages in agriculture and manufacturing respectively (Table 7.3 and Figure 7.1).

Table 7.3 Accidents to employees¹ in forestry and wood processing³, 2014-15 - 2018-19

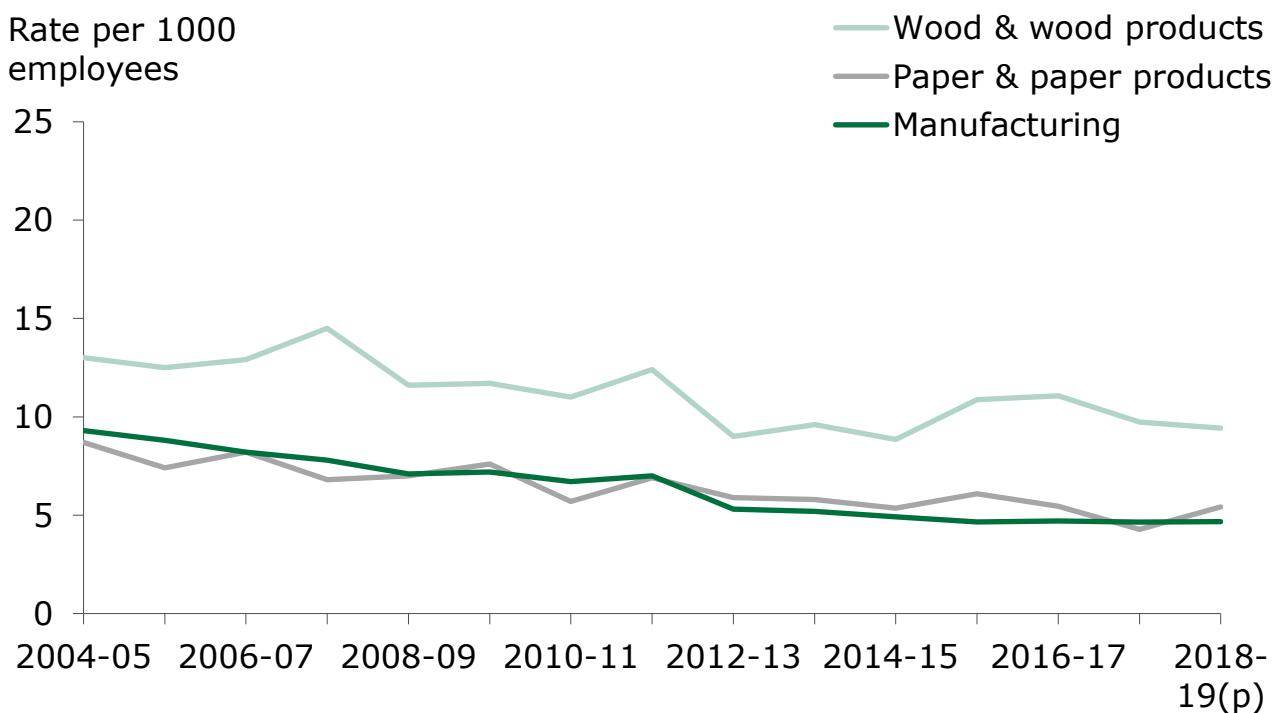
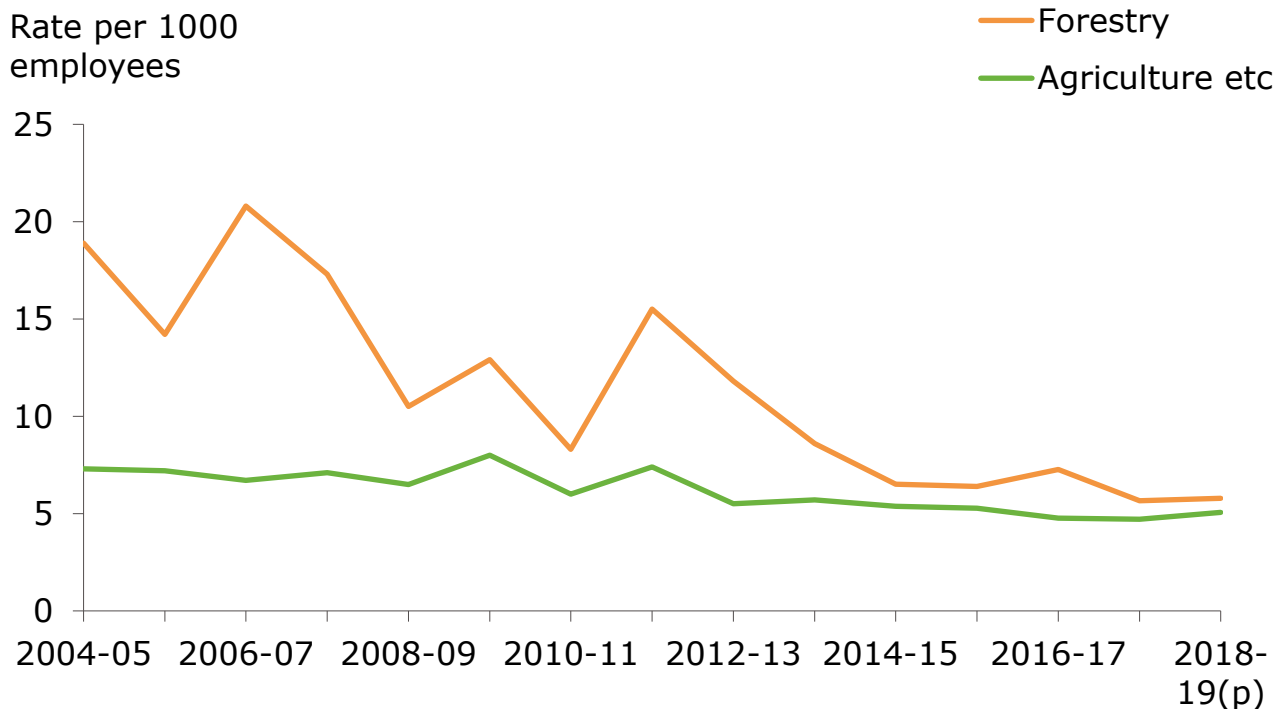
Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) ²	Number of major accidents ⁴	Major accident ⁴ rate rate/ 1000 employees	Total number of reported accidents	Total reported accident rate/ 1000 employees
Forestry				
2014-15	26	1.7	101	6.5
2015-16	34	2.0	111	6.5
2016-17	31	1.9	120	7.3
2017-18	37	2.2	94	5.7
2018-19 provisional	33	2.2	88	5.8
Wood products				
2014-15	136	2.4	510	8.9
2015-16	129	2.5	561	10.9
2016-17	149	3.0	557	11.1
2017-18	124	2.3	515	9.7
2018-19 provisional	135	2.3	560	9.4
Pulp, paper & paper products				
2014-15	75	1.3	303	5.4
2015-16	67	1.4	284	6.1
2016-17	71	1.5	257	5.5
2017-18	60	1.1	245	4.3
2018-19 provisional	72	1.4	275	5.4

Source: Health & Safety Executive.

Notes:

1. Employees only; excludes self-employed.
2. Categories are based on the [UK Standard Industrial Classification \(SIC 2007\)](#) categories. Further details on the SIC codes used are provided in the Sources: Employment and businesses page.
3. Excludes other wood-using industries.
4. Major accidents include fatal accidents, which averaged below 1 per year for forestry and 1 per year for wood processing. There were no fatal accidents in the period shown for pulp, paper and paper products.

Figure 7.1 Accidents to employees: Total reported accidents per 1000 employees, 2004-05 to 2018-19



Source: Health & Safety Executive.

Notes:

1. Employees only; excludes self-employed.
2. Categories are based on the [UK Standard Industrial Classification \(SIC 2007\)](#) categories. Further details on the SIC codes used are provided in the Sources: Employment and businesses page.
3. As a result of a change in reporting requirements, data from 2012-13 is not directly comparable with previous years.

7.4 Establishments in the primary wood processing industries

Table 7.4 shows the number of primary wood processors, according to the sampling frames used for Forest Research surveys of establishments using UK timber.

The figures in Table 7.4 do not correspond with the VAT and PAYE registration information given in Table 7.5. The figures here count establishments (sites) rather than businesses and include those that do not need to register for VAT or PAYE. They also have a different basis for classification, so some businesses that are excluded from Table 7.5 because of their VAT/PAYE classification are included in this table (typically businesses where primary wood processing is a small part of their total activity), and some businesses included in Table 7.5 are excluded here (usually because they do not use UK-grown timber).

The number of establishments in the primary wood processing industries using UK-grown roundwood has reduced from 261 in 2010 to 204 in 2019, a 22% decrease.

Table 7.4 Number of establishments in the primary wood processing industries using UK-grown roundwood

Year	Sawmills	Pulp & paper mills	Wood-based panel mills	Round fencing manufacturers	Total ¹
2010	188	2	7	64	261
2011	184	2	7	63	256
2012	180	2	7	60	249
2013	175	2	6	60	243
2014	173	2	6	56	237
2015	171	2	6	50	229
2016	166	2	6	50	224
2017	163	2	6	49	220
2018	155	2	6	46	209
2019	150	2	6	46	204

Source: industry surveys, industry associations

Notes:

1. A single mill may be recorded twice, as a sawmill and a round fencing manufacturer.

7.5 VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses

Table 7.5 shows the number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses classified under forestry and primary wood processing. The headings shown potentially include businesses not traditionally regarded as forestry or primary wood processing, and some businesses traditionally included in forestry and primary wood processing are excluded as they are classified to other headings of the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC).

A total of 4,185 forestry businesses, 530 sawmilling businesses, 125 wood-based panel businesses and 230 pulp & paper businesses were registered for VAT and/or PAYE purposes in the UK in 2019.

There has been an overall increase in forestry businesses over the last ten years, whilst sawmilling and pulp and paper businesses have declined.

Table 7.5 Number¹ of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)², 2010-2019

Year	Forestry	Sawmilling	Panels	Pulp & paper
2010	3,095	640	135	255
2011	3,170	605	135	250
2012	3,375	585	135	255
2013	3,505	560	130	240
2014	3,685	555	130	230
2015	3,925	555	125	230
2016	4,050	550	125	225
2017	4,060	540	120	240
2018	4,150	540	130	240
2019	4,185	530	125	230

Source: UK Business: Activity, Size and Location: 2019 (Office for National Statistics, October 2019).

Notes:

1. All figures are rounded by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to the nearest multiple of 5.
2. Categories are based on the [UK Standard Industrial Classification \(SIC 2007\)](#) categories. Further details on the SIC codes used are provided in the Sources: Employment and businesses page.