

Forestry Statistics 2021

Chapter 7: Employment & Businesses

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The Research Agency of the
Forestry Commission

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The Agency aims to support and enhance forestry and its role in sustainable development by providing innovative, high quality scientific research, technical support and consultancy services.

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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 2020. 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 2021) reported average employment¹ in 2019 of 18 thousand in forestry, 7 thousand in sawmilling and 5 thousand in panel mills.
- There was estimated to be a total of 7.1 thousand full time equivalent staff employed¹ by primary wood processors in the UK in 2020 a 3% decrease from the total for 2019.
- The latest major accident rates for Great Britain, covering 2019-2020, show levels similar or lower to 2018-2019 rates for both the forestry and wood products sectors, whilst the major accident rate for the pulp and paper sector has increased.
- There were 200 establishments in the primary wood processing industries in the UK using UK-grown roundwood in 2020.

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

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 2021 and includes data to 2019. It recorded average employment in 2019 of 18 thousand in forestry, 7 thousand in sawmilling and 5 thousand in panel mills (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Employment in forestry and wood processing², 2015-2019

	thousands				
Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)¹	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Forestry	17	17	..	16	18
Wood products					
Sawmilling	8	9	9	10	7
Panels	5	5	5	6	5
Secondary products	56	67	60	73	62
Total	69	81	74	89	75
Pulp, paper & paper products	56	56	55	62	56

Source: Annual Business Survey - average employment in year (Office for National Statistics, May 2021). 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.
4. .. denotes data not available.

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 7.1 thousand full time equivalent staff employed by primary wood processors in the UK in 2021 (Table 7.2a), a 3% decrease from the total for 2019.

58% of the total employment in 2021 worked in sawmills and around one quarter (27%) worked in wood-based panel mills.

Table 7.2a Employment in primary wood processing, 2016-2020

Year	full-time equivalents				
	Sawmills	Pulp & paper	Wood-based panels	Fencing	Total
2016	4,425	697	2,250	388	7,769
2017	4,568	700	2,110	405	7,792
2018	4,305	693	2,175	399	7,577
2019	4,113	663	2,075	397	7,253
2020	4,069	660	1,933	404	7,066

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. There were around 8.0 thousand employees in 2020, similar to the level in 2019.

Table 7.2b Direct employment in paper and board mills, 2016-2020

Year	number of employees				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Direct employees	7,911	7,849	7,939	8,010	8,016

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 2019-2020, show levels similar or lower to 2018-2019 rates for both the forestry and wood products sectors, whilst the major accident rate for the pulp and paper sector has increased. Over the longer term, the rate for forestry has generally declined with and, for 2019-20, is now lower than agriculture (Table 7.3, Figure 7.1a and Figure 7.1b).

Table 7.3 Accidents to employees¹ in forestry and wood processing³, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020

Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) ²	Number of major accidents ⁴	Major accident ⁴ rate/1000 employees	Total number of reported accidents	Total reported accident rate/ 1000 employees
Forestry				
2015-16	34	1.9	111	6.4
2016-17	31	1.9	120	7.3
2017-18	37	2.2	94	5.7
2018-19	33	2.1	90	5.9
2019-20p	26	1.4	76	4.3
Wood products				
2015-16	129	2.4	561	10.9
2016-17	149	3.0	557	11.1
2017-18	124	2.3	515	9.7
2018-19	136	2.3	568	9.6
2019-20p	111	2.1	514	9.8
Pulp, paper & paper products				
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	72	1.4	279	5.5
2019-20p	77	1.6	276	5.7

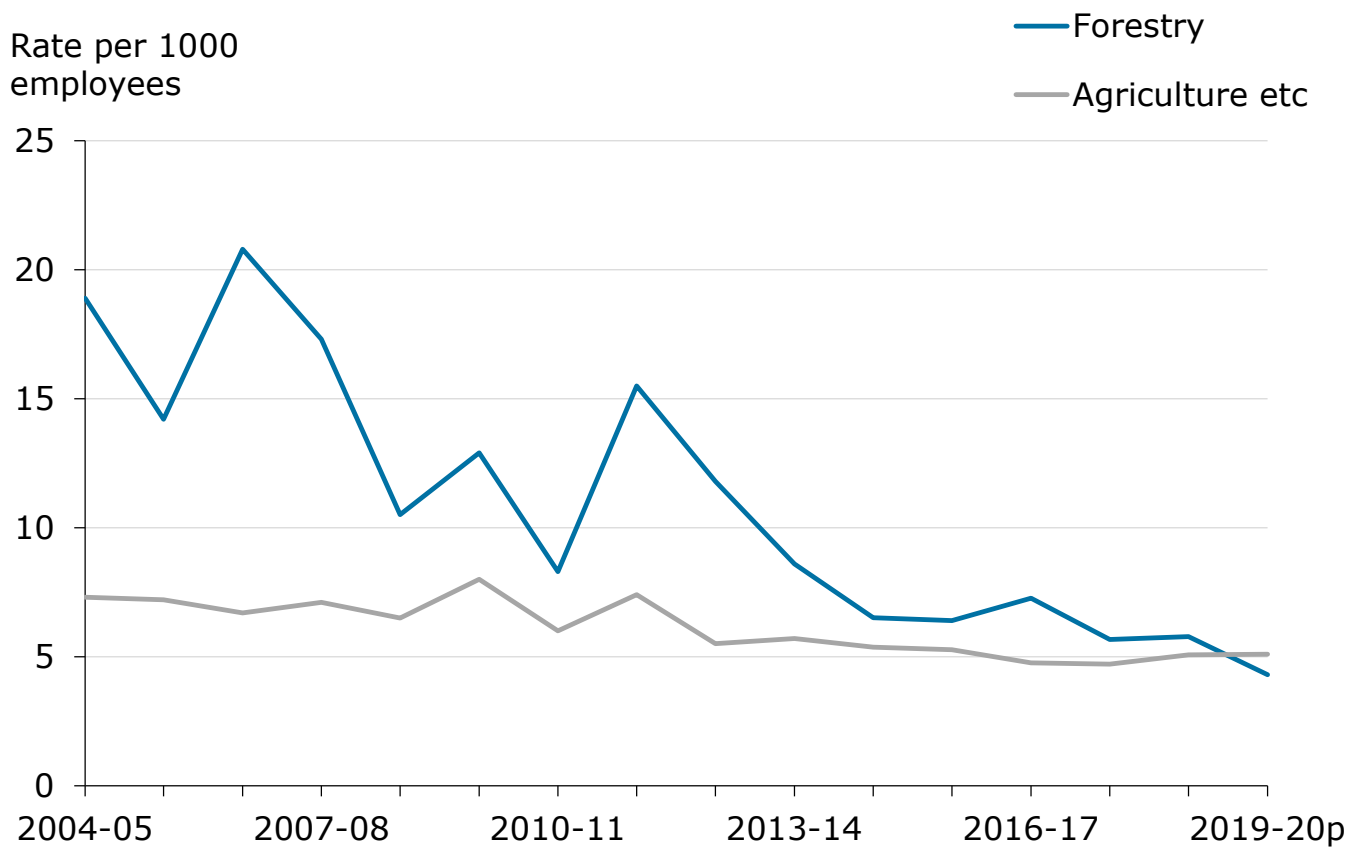
Source: Health & Safety Executive

Note:

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.

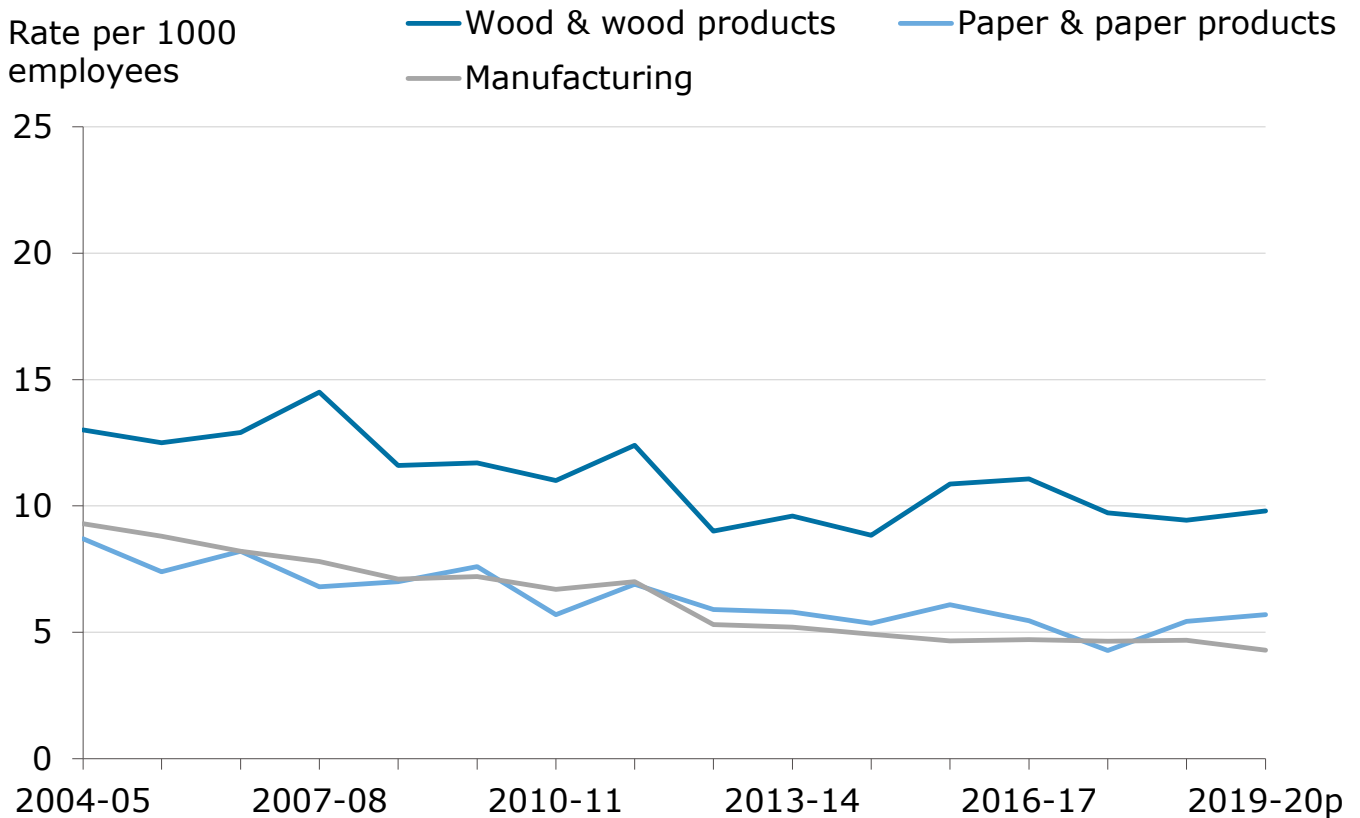
4. Major accidents include fatal accidents, which averaged around 1 per year or less for each sector.
5. Data for previous years susceptible to revision.
6. p denotes provisional figures

Figure 7.1a Accidents to employees: Total reported accidents per 1000 employees, 2004-2005 to 2019-2020



See figure 7.1b for information on sources and notes.

Figure 7.1b Accidents to employees: Total reported accidents per 1000 employees, 2004-2005 to 2019-2020



Source (figure 7.1a & figure 7.1b): Health & Safety Executive

Note:

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.
4. p denotes provisional figures.

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 255 in 2011 to 200 in 2020, a 22% decrease.

Table 7.4 Number of establishments in the primary wood processing industries using UK-grown roundwood, 2011-2020

Year	Sawmills	Pulp & paper mills	Wood-based panel mills	Round fencing manufacturers	Total¹
2011	183	2	7	63	255
2012	179	2	7	60	248
2013	174	2	6	60	242
2014	172	2	6	56	236
2015	170	2	6	50	228
2016	165	2	6	50	223
2017	162	2	6	49	219
2018	154	2	6	46	208
2019	149	2	6	46	203
2020	147	2	6	45	200

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 4,270 forestry businesses, 510 sawmilling businesses, 135 wood-based panel businesses and 220 pulp & paper businesses were registered for VAT and/or PAYE purposes in the UK in 2020.

In 2020, there has been a decrease in the number of businesses across all sectors except panels.

Table 7.5 Number¹ of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)², 2011-2020

Year	Forestry	Sawmilling	Panels	Pulp & paper
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
2020	4,270	510	135	220

Source: UK Business; Activity, Size and Location: 2020 (Office for National Statistics, October 2020).

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.

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