

Forestry Statistics 2022

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 2021. 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 page](#).

Key findings

The main findings are:

- The Business Register and Employment Survey (May 2022) reported average employment¹ in 2020 of 19 thousand in forestry, 8 thousand in sawmilling and 5 thousand in panel mills.
- There was estimated to be a total of 7.4 thousand full time equivalent staff employed¹ by primary wood processors in the UK in 2021, a 6% increase from the total for 2020.
- The latest major accident rates for Great Britain, covering 2020/21, show small reductions compared to 2019/20 rates for forestry, wood product and pulp, paper and paper product sectors.
- There were 194 establishments in the primary wood processing industries in the UK using UK-grown roundwood in 2021.

¹ There are a number of differences in the scope of the employment estimates provided by the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) and the full-time equivalent figures obtained from the annual surveys of the UK timber industry run by Forest Research (FR). In particular, the BRES 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: Business Register and Employment Survey

The Business Register and Employment Survey, 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.

Average employment in 2020 for forestry was estimated at 19 thousand in forestry, 8 thousand in sawmilling and 5 thousand in panel mills (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Employment in forestry and wood processing¹, United Kingdom, 2016 to 2020

	thousands				
Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)²	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Forestry	17	[c]	16	18	19
Sawmilling	9	9	10	7	8
Panels	5	5	6	5	5
Secondary products	67	60	73	63	60
Total wood products	81	74	89	76	73
Pulp, paper & paper products	56	55	62	53	50

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey (Office for National Statistics, May 2022: further estimates provided by ONS).

Notes:

1. Excludes other wood-using industries.
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. 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. [c] denotes suppressed data.

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 7.4 thousand full time equivalent staff employed by primary wood processors in the UK in 2021 (Table 7.2a), a 6% increase from the total for 2020.

58% of those employed in primary wood processing in 2021 worked in sawmills and over one quarter (28%) in wood-based panel mills.

Table 7.2a Employment in primary wood processing, United Kingdom, 2017 to 2021

Year	full-time equivalents				
	Sawmills	Pulp & paper	Wood-based panels	Fencing	Total
2017	4,562	700	2,110	405	7,777
2018	4,297	693	2,175	399	7,564
2019	4,105	663	2,075	397	7,240
2020	4,052	660	1,933	404	7,049
2021	4,288	635	2,106	414	7,443

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 7.7 thousand employees in 2021, a 4% decrease from the previous year.

Table 7.2b Direct employment in paper and board mills, United Kingdom, 2017 to 2021

number of employees					
Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Direct employees	7,911	7,849	8,010	8,016	7,693

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

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations is the legal system, provided by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), under which fatal and defined non-fatal injuries to workers and members of the public are reported by employers.

As of April 2012, a legislative change introduced the requirement to report injuries to workers that lead to absence from work or inability to do their usual job, for over seven days. Prior to this, reporting was required for absences of at least three days. From October 2013, legislative changes were introduced to simplify this reporting of workplace injuries. One key change was the introduction of 'specified' injuries, which replaced the previous 'major injury' category. We report on the total number and rate of accidents by SIC, as well as major accidents – those occurring in the workplace and causing an absence or impingement on usual performance for 7-days or more.

The latest major accident rates for Great Britain, covering 2020/21, show small reductions compared to 2019/20 rates for forestry, wood products and pulp, paper & paper products. Over the longer term, the rate for forestry has generally declined. The total reported accident rate for forestry in 2020/21 is now at a similar level to the rate for agriculture (Table 7.3, Figure 7.1a and Figure 7.1b).

Table 7.3 Accidents to employees¹ in forestry and wood processing³, Great Britain, 2016/17 to 2020/21

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				
2016/17	31	1.9	120	7.3
2017/18	37	2.2	94	5.7
2018/19	33	2.2	90	6.0
2019/20	28	1.6	81	4.6
2020/21 [p]	23	1.5	73	4.7
Wood products				
2016/17	149	3.0	557	11.1
2017/18	124	2.3	515	9.7
2018/19	136	2.3	568	9.6
2019/20	111	2.1	514	9.8
2020/21 [p]	88	1.8	355	7.2
Pulp, paper & paper products				
2016/17	71	1.5	257	5.5
2017/18	60	1.1	245	4.3
2018/19	72	1.4	279	5.5
2019/20	78	1.6	278	5.8
2020/21 [p]	84	1.5	262	4.7

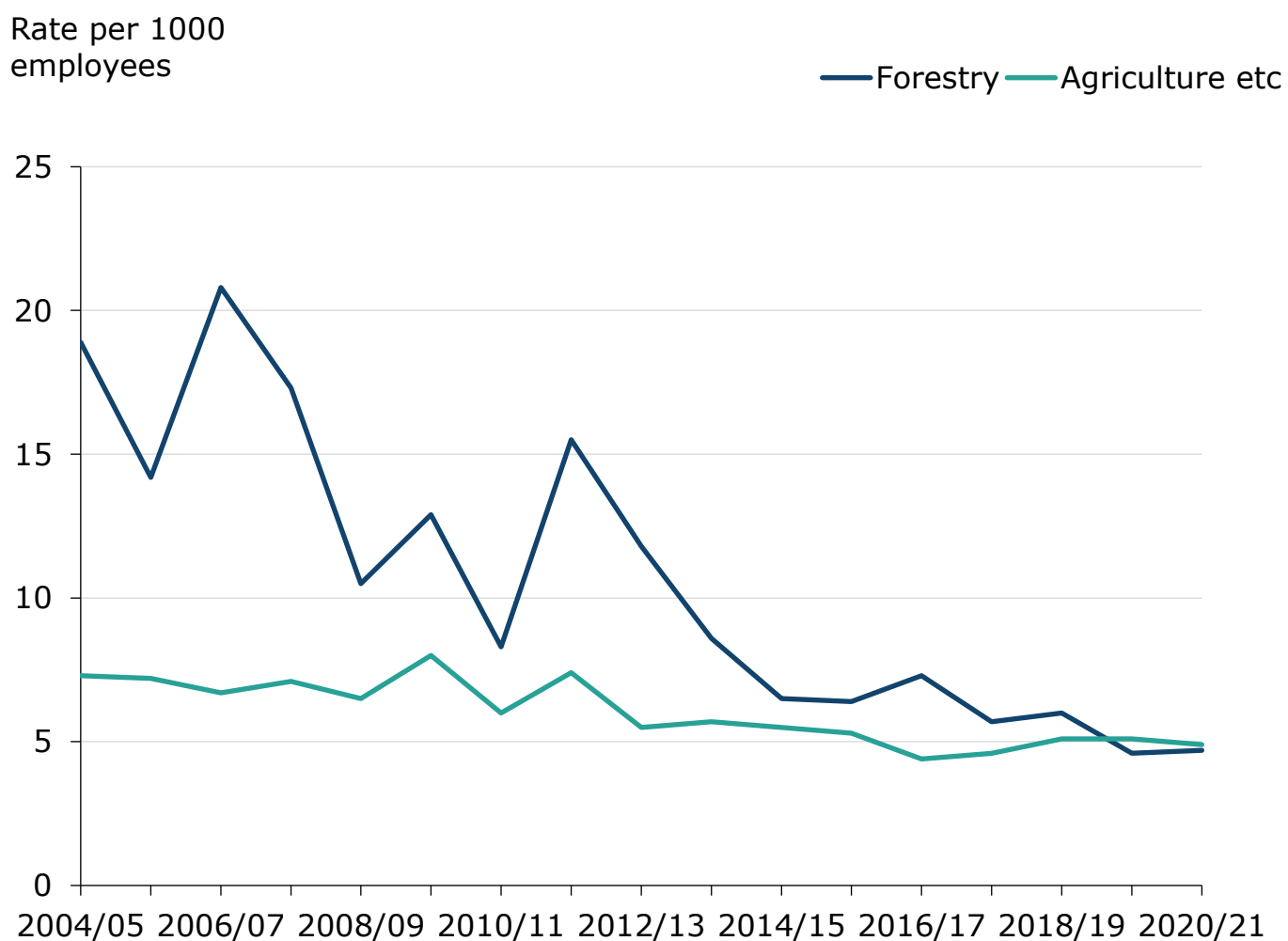
Source: Health & Safety Executive

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. Data for previous years susceptible to revision.

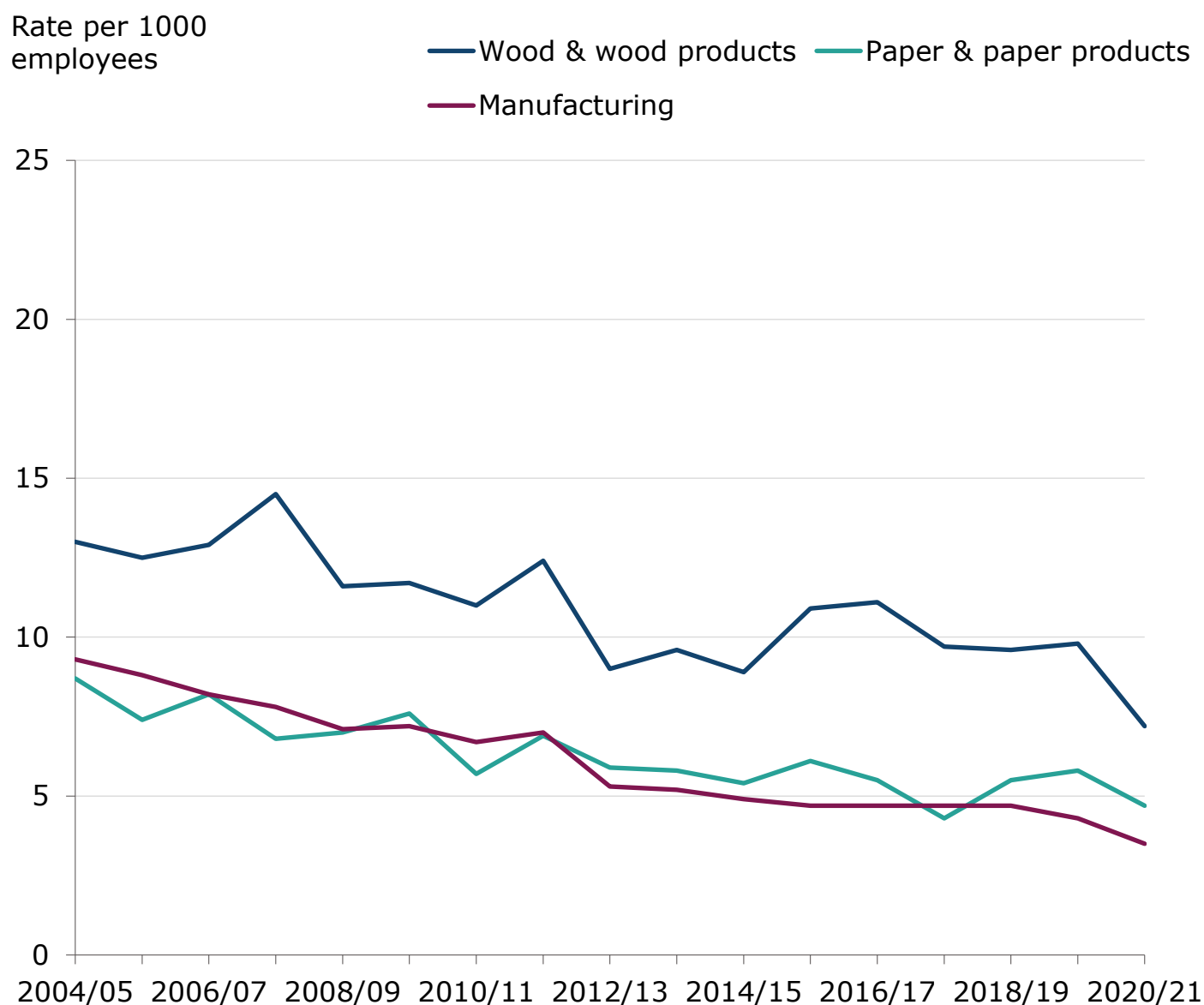
5. [p] denotes provisional figures.

Figure 7.1a Accidents to employees: Total reported accidents per 1000 employees, Great Britain, 2004/05 to 2020/21



See Figure 7.1b for information on sources and notes.

Figure 7.1b Accidents to employees: Total reported accidents per 1000 employees, Great Britain, 2004/05 to 2020/21



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.

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 between 2020 and 2021.

Table 7.4 Number of establishments in the primary wood processing industries using UK-grown roundwood, United Kingdom, 2012 to 2021

Year	Sawmills	Pulp & paper mills	Wood-based panel mills	Round fencing manufacturers	Total ¹
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
2021	141	2	6	45	194

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 4,450 forestry businesses, 515 sawmilling businesses, 140 wood-based panel businesses and 235 pulp & paper businesses were registered for VAT and/or PAYE purposes in the UK in 2021.

Table 7.5 Number¹ of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)², United Kingdom, 2012 to 2021

Year	Forestry	Sawmilling	Panels	Pulp & paper
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
2021	4,450	515	140	235

Source: UK Business; Activity, Size and Location: 2021 (Office for National Statistics, October 2021).

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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