

Forestry Statistics 2024

Chapter 3: Trade

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Introduction

This chapter contains information about UK imports and exports of wood products, and about the level of apparent consumption estimated from data for UK production, imports and exports.

Most information on imports and exports come from [the Overseas Trade Statistics compiled by HM Revenue & Customs](#). Estimates are provided at a UK level only.

International comparisons of apparent consumption are provided later in the International Forestry chapter. Further information on the data sources and methodology used to compile the figures is provided in the Chapter 10: Sources and Methodology.

Figures for 2023 were previously published in [UK Wood Production and Trade: provisional figures](#), released on 16 May 2024. Some figures for 2023 and earlier years have been revised from those previously published. For further details on revisions, see the Trade section of Chapter 10: Sources and Methodology.

A copy of all trade tables can be accessed in spreadsheet format from the [Time Series page](#).

Key findings

The main findings are:

UK imports:

- 6.2 million cubic metres of sawnwood in 2023, a 1% decrease from 2022;
- 3.1 million cubic metres of wood-based panels in 2023, a 3% decrease from 2022;
- 6.4 million tonnes of wood pellets in 2023, a 15% decrease from 2022;
- 4.8 million tonnes of paper in 2023, a 12% decrease from 2022.
- The total value of wood product imports in 2023 was £9.0 billion, representing a 15% decrease from 2022; of which £4.3 billion was pulp and paper.
- Sawn softwood, sawn hardwood, particleboard, fibreboard, and paper and paperboard were mainly imported from EU countries in 2023.
- Wood pulp imports originated from a range of both EU and non-EU countries in 2023.
- The vast majority of UK imports of plywood and wood pellets came from countries outside the EU in 2023.
- Apparent consumption of wood in the UK was 42.4 million cubic metres Wood Raw Material Equivalent underbark in 2023, representing a 12% decrease from the previous year.

UK exports:

- The total value of wood product exports in 2023 was £1.7 billion, a 22% decrease from 2022; of which £1.5 billion was pulp and paper.

3.1 Apparent consumption of wood in the UK

Apparent consumption is the amount of timber used as wood and wood products by people and industries in the UK. It is calculated as total domestic production plus imports, minus exports. Apparent consumption differs from actual consumption by the extent of changes in the level of stocks. It is not practical to collect information on actual consumption.

As Table 3.1 covers a broad range of products (including secondary processed wood products), volumes are expressed in Wood Raw Material Equivalent (WRME) underbark. WRME volumes represent the amount of wood that would have been required to make the product.

UK production of roundwood totalled 9.5 million cubic metres WRME underbark in 2023 (Table 3.1). A further 37.4 million cubic metres WRME underbark of wood and wood products were imported to the UK and 4.5 million cubic metres WRME underbark were exported, giving an apparent consumption of 42.4 million cubic metres WRME underbark. This represented a 12% decrease in apparent consumption from the previous year. These figures exclude recycled wood and recovered paper (see Table 3.3 for statistics on recovered paper).

Imports accounted for 73% of all wood (production and imports) in the UK in 2023.

Table 3.1 Apparent consumption of wood¹, UK, 2014 to 2023

million cubic metres WRME underbark

Year	UK production²	Imports	Exports	Apparent consumption
2014	11.2	47.0	4.8	53.4
2015	10.6	49.3	4.1	55.8
2016	10.8	49.6	3.8	56.5
2017	10.9	50.3	4.2	57.0
2018	11.2	49.1	3.9	56.4
2019	10.8	48.4	4.0	55.2
2020	10.5	48.0	3.6	54.8
2021	10.9	46.9	4.7	53.1
2022	9.8	43.1	4.5	48.3
2023	9.5	37.4	4.5	42.4

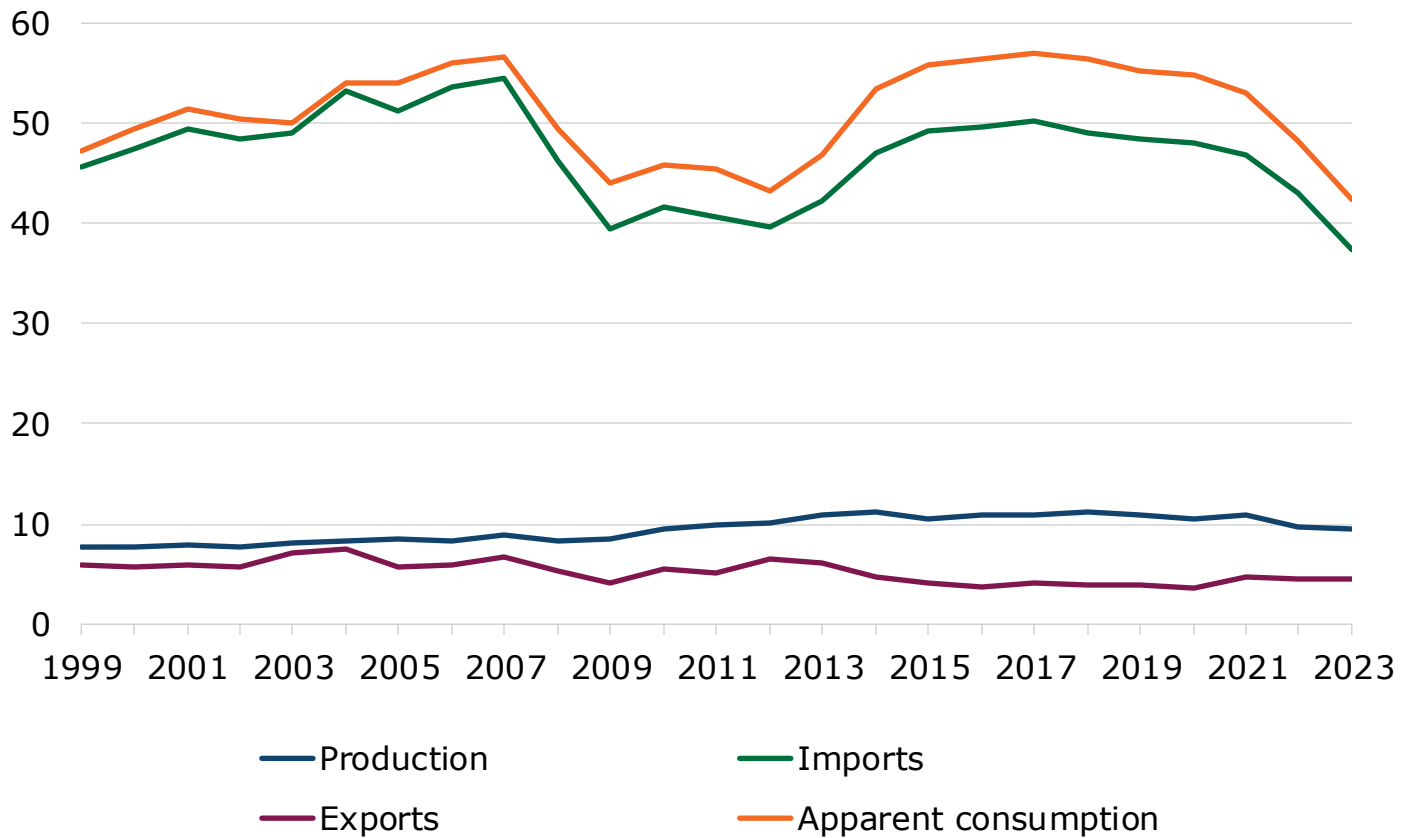
Source: Industry surveys (Forest Research), industry associations, UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs) and conversion factors to Wood Raw Material Equivalent (WRME).

Notes:

1. Excludes recycled wood and recovered paper.
2. UK production of roundwood is estimated from deliveries to wood processing industries and others, as in Tables 2.5 and 2.6.

Figure 3.1 Apparent consumption of wood, UK, 1999 to 2023

million cubic metres WRME underbark



Source: Industry surveys (Forest Research), industry associations, UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs) and conversion factors to Wood Raw Material Equivalent (WRME).

Notes:

1. Excludes recycled wood and recovered paper.
2. UK production of roundwood is estimated from deliveries to wood processing industries and others, as in Tables 2.5 and 2.6.

3.2 Apparent consumption of wood products in the UK

Table 3.2 provides volumes of UK production, trade and apparent consumption in selected wood products. It differs from Table 3.1 in terms of both coverage (Table 3.1 covers a wider range of wood and wood products, including secondary processed products) and in terms of units (Wood Raw Material Equivalents (WRME) in Table 3.1, volumes of product in Table 3.2). UK production accounted for 31% of the UK sawnwood market, 46% of the UK wood-based panel market and 48% of the UK paper market in 2023 (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Apparent consumption of wood products^{1,2}, UK, 2023

thousand cubic metres, except thousand tonnes for paper and paperboard

Product	UK production	Imports	Exports	Apparent consumption
Sawnwood, coniferous	2,873	5,726	170	8,428
Sawnwood, non-coniferous	35	484	19	500
Total sawnwood	2,908	6,210	189	8,929
Wood-based panels, veneer sheets	0	7	1	6
Wood-based panels, plywood	0	1,167	48	1,119
Wood-based panels, particleboard	2,378	1,044	214	3,208
Wood-based panels, fibreboard	606	915	48	1,473
Total wood-based panels	2,984	3,134	311	5,806

Product	UK production	Imports	Exports	Apparent consumption
Paper and paperboard, sanitary and household papers	734	362	8	1,088
Paper and paperboard, packaging materials	1,721	1,992	456	3,257
Paper and paperboard, other paper and paperboard (including graphic papers)	770	351	277	844
Total paper and paperboard	3,225	2,706	742	5,189

Source: Industry surveys (Forest Research), industry associations, UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs).

Notes:

1. Excludes other wood products, e.g., fuelwood and round fencing.
2. Excludes roundwood and intermediate products (e.g., sawmill products, pulp and recovered paper) to avoid double-counting.
3. Includes sleepers.

3.3 Flow of recovered paper

UK production of recovered paper (the amount recovered from businesses and households in the UK) totalled 6.4 million tonnes in 2023 (Table 3.3), a 4% decrease from 2022. Imports decreased by 43% and exports decreased by 3% between 2022 and 2023, resulting in an 8% decrease in apparent consumption over this period.

Table 3.3 Flow of recovered paper, UK, 2014 to 2023

thousand tonnes

Year	UK production	Imports	Exports	Apparent consumption ¹
2014	8,014	136	4,436	3,714
2015	7,912	305	4,881	3,336
2016	7,825	125	4,932	3,018
2017	7,772	107	4,733	3,147
2018	7,539	120	4,530	3,129
2019	7,348	83	4,327	3,104
2020	6,647	130	3,842	2,935
2021	7,103	130	4,299	2,934
2022	6,678	168	4,082	2,764
2023	6,396	96	3,955	2,537

Source: Confederation of Paper Industries, UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs).

Notes:

1. Apparent consumption of recovered paper refers to use of recycled paper pulp in the UK.

3.4 UK import quantities by product

Wood imports to the UK in 2023 included 6.2 million cubic metres of sawnwood (a 1% decrease from the previous year), 3.1 million cubic metres of wood-based panels (a 3% decrease), 6.4 million tonnes of wood pellets (a 15% decrease) and 4.8 million tonnes of pulp and paper (a 12% decrease) (Table 3.4a).

Table 3.4a Import quantities, UK, 2014 to 2023¹

thousand cubic metres, except thousand tonnes for 'Wood pellets' and 'Pulp and paper'

Year	Sawnwood²	Wood-based panels³	Other wood⁴	Wood pellets	Pulp and paper
2014	6,425	3,260	1,329	4,773	7,319
2015	6,323	3,215	1,378	6,573	7,560
2016	6,794	3,410	1,121	6,782	7,092
2017	7,663	3,800	1,379	6,885	6,798
2018	7,213	3,878	1,766	7,992	6,663
2019	7,040	3,650	2,112	8,878	6,130
2020	7,218	3,267	2,136	9,078	5,329
2021	8,159	3,794	1,602	9,128	5,114
2022	6,294	3,230	1,772	7,516	5,452
2023	6,210	3,134	1,653	6,364	4,784

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations.

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Chapter 10: Sources and Methodology).
2. Sawnwood includes sleepers from 2017.
3. Includes veneer sheets.
4. Includes roundwood, wood charcoal, chips, particles, residues and from 2017, includes recovered wood.

Paper accounted for the majority of pulp and paper imports, with a total of 3.9 million tonnes imported in 2023 (Table 3.4b). This represented a 12% decrease from the previous year.

Table 3.4b Import quantities, UK, 2014 to 2023¹: Pulp and paper

thousand tonnes

Year	Paper	Pulp	Recovered paper	Total
2014	5,949	1,234	136	7,319
2015	6,032	1,223	305	7,560
2016	5,876	1,092	125	7,092
2017	5,610	1,081	107	6,798
2018	5,477	1,066	120	6,663
2019	5,150	897	83	6,130
2020	4,555	644	130	5,329
2021	4,206	778	130	5,114
2022	4,423	861	168	5,452
2023	3,903	785	96	4,784

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations.

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Chapter 10: Sources and Methodology).

3.5 UK export quantities by product

A total of 4.7 million tonnes of pulp and paper (including recovered paper) was exported from the UK in 2023 (Table 3.5a), representing a 4% decrease from 2022.

Table 3.5a Export quantities, UK, 2014 to 2023¹

thousand cubic metres, except thousand tonnes for 'Wood pellets' and 'Pulp and paper'

Year	Sawnwood ²	Wood-based panels ³	Other wood ⁴	Wood pellets	Pulp and paper ⁵
2014	175	404	1,083	98	5,467
2015	187	286	1,018	88	5,712
2016	193	314	810	21	5,700
2017	218	374	638	126	5,528
2018	238	295	595	63	5,317
2019	215	384	604	33	5,160
2020	231	389	301	4	4,617
2021	277	321	302	2	5,352
2022	183	370	285	23	4,861
2023	189	311	547	11	4,666

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations.

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Chapter 10: Sources and Methodology).
2. Sawnwood includes sleepers from 2017.

3. Includes veneer sheets.
4. Includes roundwood, wood charcoal, chips, particles, residues and, from 2017, includes recovered wood.
5. Further details of pulp and paper export quantities are provided in Table 3.5b.

Recovered paper accounted for the majority of pulp and paper exports, with 0.7 million tonnes exported in 2023 (Table 3.5b).

Table 3.5b Export quantities, UK, 2014 to 2023¹: Pulp and paper

thousand tonnes

Year	Paper	Pulp	Recovered paper	Total
2014	1,010	21	4,436	5,467
2015	807	24	4,881	5,712
2016	760	7	4,932	5,700
2017	788	7	4,733	5,528
2018	772	15	4,530	5,317
2019	825	9	4,327	5,160
2020	749	26	3,842	4,617
2021	1,048	5	4,299	5,352
2022	774	5	4,082	4,861
2023	681	30	3,955	4,666

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations.

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Chapter 10: Sources and Methodology).

3.6 UK import values by product

Wood product imports in 2023 were valued at a total of £9.0 billion, a 15% decrease from 2022 (Table 3.6a). Pulp and paper (including recovered paper) accounted for 48% of the total import value in 2023. Sawnwood imports were valued at £1.8 billion in 2023, wood-based panels at £1.4 billion and wood pellets at £1.2 billion.

Table 3.6a Import values, UK, 2014 to 2023¹

£ million

Year	Sawnwood ²	Wood-based panels ³	Other wood ⁴	Wood pellets	Pulp and paper ⁵	Total
2014	1,420	936	80	547	4,196	7,180
2015	1,311	957	88	780	4,375	7,510
2016	1,423	1,010	85	915	4,003	7,436
2017	1,636	962	90	961	3,998	7,647
2018	1,743	1,201	75	1,117	4,075	8,210
2019	1,598	1,134	97	1,309	4,076	8,214
2020	1,587	970	198	1,339	3,388	7,482
2021	2,668	1,313	173	1,295	3,088	8,538
2022	2,247	1,583	282	1,323	5,209	10,643
2023	1,820	1,373	269	1,233	4,322	9,017

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations.

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Chapter 10: Sources and Methodology).

2. Sawnwood includes sleepers from 2017.
3. Includes veneer sheets.
4. Includes roundwood, wood charcoal, chips, particles, residues and from 2017, includes recovered wood.
5. Further details of pulp and paper import values are provided in Table 3.6b.

Paper imports were valued at £3.8 billion in 2023, accounting for 89% of all pulp and paper imports (Table 3.6b).

Table 3.6b Import values, UK, 2014 to 2023¹: Pulp and paper

£ million

Year	Paper	Pulp	Recovered paper	Total
2014	3,667	509	19	4,196
2015	3,711	642	23	4,375
2016	3,434	557	13	4,003
2017	3,418	566	14	3,998
2018	3,415	639	21	4,075
2019	3,538	520	17	4,076
2020	2,903	451	35	3,388
2021	2,666	396	26	3,088
2022	4,574	596	39	5,209
2023	3,839	464	19	4,322

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations.

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Chapter 10: Sources and Methodology).

3.7 UK export values by product

Wood product exports from the UK were valued at a total of £1.7 billion in 2023, a 22% decrease from the 2022 total (Table 3.7a). Total exports of wood products in 2023 comprised 83.8% pulp and paper, 7.9% wood-based panels, and 3.3% other wood.

Table 3.7a Export values, UK, 2014 to 2023¹

£ million

Year	Sawnwood ²	Wood-based panels ³	Other wood ⁴	Wood pellets	Pulp and paper ⁵	Total
2014	43	107	39	2	1,480	1,672
2015	44	75	35	1	1,441	1,597
2016	50	91	26	0	1,307	1,473
2017	55	109	41	6	1,651	1,861
2018	64	103	22	5	1,597	1,791
2019	58	123	22	2	1,491	1,695
2020	63	114	36	1	1,336	1,549
2021	96	158	44	0	1,674	1,972
2022	85	172	46	12	1,923	2,238
2023	83	138	57	5	1,460	1,743

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations.

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Chapter 10: Sources and Methodology).

2. Sawnwood includes sleepers from 2017.
3. Includes veneer sheets.
4. Includes roundwood, wood charcoal, chips, particles, residues and from 2017, includes recovered wood.
5. Further details of pulp and paper export values are provided in Table 3.7b.

Paper exports were valued at £0.9 billion in 2023, accounting for 64% of all pulp and paper exports (Table 3.7b).

Table 3.7b Export values, UK, 2014 to 2023¹: Pulp and paper

£ million

Year	Paper	Pulp	Recovered paper	Total
2014	997	7	476	1,480
2015	901	7	534	1,441
2016	838	4	465	1,307
2017	997	5	649	1,651
2018	1,022	5	570	1,597
2019	1,049	4	437	1,491
2020	931	11	394	1,336
2021	940	3	731	1,674
2022	1,171	4	749	1,923
2023	931	8	521	1,460

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations.

Notes:

1. There are reliability concerns for some of these figures, particularly for individual products (see Chapter 10: Sources and Methodology).

3.8 Origin of wood imports

Table 3.8 presents data on the source of selected wood products that have been imported into the UK in 2023.

Sawn softwood, sawn hardwood, particleboard, fibreboard, and paper and paperboard were mainly imported from EU countries in 2023 (Table 3.8):

- Sweden (43%), Latvia (19%) and Finland (13%) provided the majority of imports of sawn softwood to the UK.
- France (16%) and Latvia (13%) provided almost a third of the sawn hardwood imported to the UK.
- Most particleboard imports to the UK came from France (17%), Ireland (16%) and Germany (14%).
- Most fibreboard imports to the UK came from Ireland (34%) and Germany (18%).
- Most paper and paperboard imports came from Germany (17%), Sweden (15%), and Finland (11%).

Wood pulp imports originated from a range of both EU and non-EU countries in 2023:

- Brazil (36%) and Sweden (26%) provided most of the wood pulp imports to the UK.

The vast majority of UK imports of plywood and wood pellets came from countries outside the EU in 2023:

- China (51%) and Brazil (18%) were the principal sources of plywood imports to the UK.
- United States of America (73%) and Canada (8%) provided the majority of wood pellet imports to the UK.

Table 3.8 Country of origin of wood imports to the UK, 2023

percent of total UK imports (volume) in each category

Source	Sawn softwood ¹	Sawn hardwood ¹	Ply-wood	Particle-board	Fibre-board	Pellets	Wood pulp	Paper and paper-board
Sweden	43	3	0	0	0	0	26	15
Germany	8	3	0	14	18	1	0	17
Finland	13	1	5	0	1	0	9	11
Latvia	19	13	3	11	2	9	0	0
France	0	16	0	17	2	0	0	7
Ireland	8	1	1	16	34	0	4	1
Netherlands	2	6	1	5	1	1	6	6
Belgium	1	4	1	11	9	1	0	7
Portugal	0	0	0	7	1	1	0	4
Poland	0	2	2	1	4	0	1	2
Estonia	1	7	0	0	0	1	0	0
Other EU	1	10	3	14	12	3	9	8
Total EU	96	66	16	96	84	17	55	78
United States of America	0	14	0	0	0	73	0	4
Canada	1	2	1	0	0	8	0	3
Brazil	0	3	18	0	5	2	36	1
China	0	0	51	1	8	0	0	2
Norway	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	4

Source	Sawn softwood ¹	Sawn hardwood ¹	Ply-wood	Particle-board	Fibre-board	Pellets	Wood pulp	Paper and paper-board
Other non-EU	1	15	13	3	3	0	9	8
Total non-EU	4	34	84	4	16	83	45	22

Source: UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations.

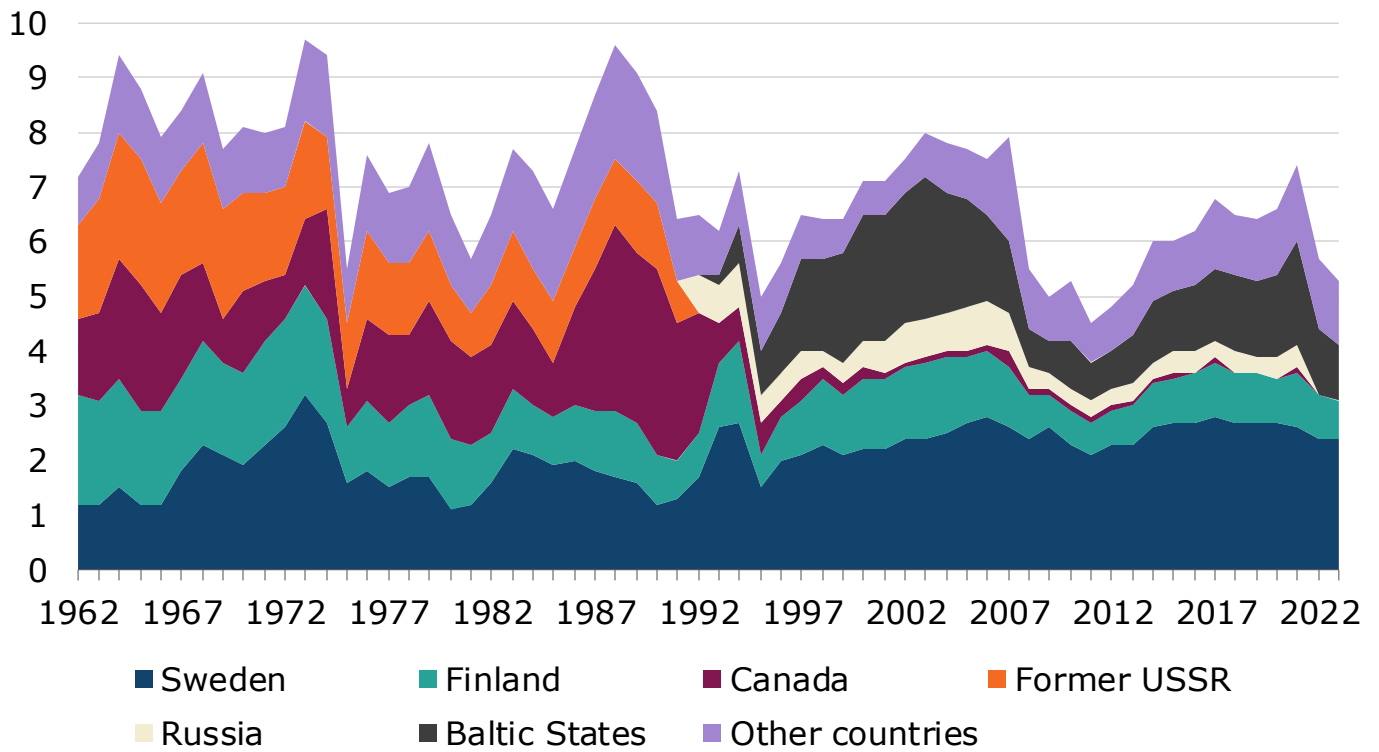
Notes:

1. Sawntwood imports in this table exclude sleepers.

Figure 3.2 shows the main sources of imports of sawn softwood to the UK since 1962. The total level of sawn softwood imports has fluctuated between around 5 million cubic metres and 10 million cubic metres from 1962 to present. Imports to the UK from Canada have reduced substantially since the early 1990s. In contrast, imports from the Baltic States increased between 1992 and 2003 and, although there was some decline between 2003 to 2012, imports from the Baltic States to the UK have started to increase again in recent years. Since 1993, Sweden has consistently been the principal country of origin for UK sawn softwood imports.

Figure 3.2 Country of origin of sawn softwood imports to the UK, 1962 to 2023

import volume (million cubic metres)



Source: FAO, UK overseas trade statistics (HM Revenue & Customs), industry associations.

Notes: 1. Sawn softwood imports in this chart exclude sleepers.

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