

Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators

Headline Performance Update
30 June 2021

Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators Headline Performance Update at 30 June 2021 (First Release)

The Forestry Commission publishes a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) to show our contribution towards forestry and woodlands in England, and to show barometers of trends in the wider forestry sector in England. The indicators reflect our priorities to protect, improve and expand England's woodlands. They display some of the contributions Forestry England makes to people, nature and the economy through the nation's forests. Our use of indicators also reflects our commitment to evidence-based working and to ensuring that there is a robust evidence base available to the forestry sector to underpin policies and operational decisions. As such they show part of how we are contributing to delivery of the government's 25 Year Environment Plan¹.

Forest Services' Five-Year Strategy identified the need to review our key performance indicators to ensure that these remain good measures of the positive differences we are making in the real world and are improved where necessary. The outcome of the review is an enhanced suite of indicators approved by the Forest Services Board. The indicators will help us monitor aspects of *The England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024* launched recently².

We have added new indicators to pick up on key new areas and made some changes to the suite of six headline indicators. Indicators that remain relevant have been retained with some enhancements. A small number of indicators, now less relevant, will no longer be reported.

All of the new suite of Forest Services indicators were reported in our *Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Report for 2020-21*³ published in June 2021.

Our first quarterly monitoring report on the new set of six headline indicators is provided in this *Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Headline Performance Update at 30 June 2021*. The quarterly interim updates are provided where data are available. The six headline indicators are listed in Table 1.

¹ HM Government (2018) *A Green Future: Our Plan to Improve the Environment*, London: Defra, at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

² UK Government (2021) *The England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024*, London: UK Government, 30 pages, at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-trees-action-plan-2021-to-2024>

³ Forestry Commission (2021) *Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Report for 2020-21*, Bristol: Forestry Commission, 68 pages, at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forestry-commission-key-performance-indicators-report-for-2020-21>

Table 1: Forestry Commission Headline Key Performance Indicators

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The creation of Forestry England as a refreshed and re-energised organisation to care for the nation’s forests and increase their value to society provided the opportunity to consider these KPIs. Assessment of the existing KPIs illustrated that they needed to be updated to better reflect the current purpose of the organisation and connect better to the operational decision making. With guidance from the Forestry England Board and Executive Team a new Performance Evaluation Framework was developed.

Within the Framework, the key performance indicators for Forestry England are those measures that relate to overall organisational purpose as well as key policy requirements. They are long-term measures, calculated and reported annually. The first reports are in our *Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Report for 2020-21* published in June 2021. This is the first year that this new suite of Forestry England KPIs has been used. The indicators will help monitor achievement of Forestry England’s five-year plan, *Growing the future: 2021-26* launched recently⁴.

The coverage of all our key performance indicators is England and figures are at country level. Most of the indicators are based on statistical and geographical analysis of Forestry Commission administrative data, the National Forest Inventory, surveys conducted and commissioned for us by the Forest Research statistics team, and data available from other parts of Defra Group and other data collections.

⁴ Forestry England (2021) *Growing the future: 2021-26*, Bristol: Forestry England, 18 pages, at <https://www.forestryengland.uk/growing-the-future>

This is an Official Statistics publication, produced with a view to meeting the standards of the *Code of Practice for Statistics* (Office for Statistics Regulation and UK Statistics Authority, 2018). The Government Internal Audit Agency have assured the latest annual outturn statistics.

We publish:

- Updates on the six headline Forest Services indicators quarterly.
- Updates on the six headline Forestry England indicators annually.
- Reports on the full suite of Forestry Commission indicators, 38 in all, annually.

See the [Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators web pages on GOV.UK](#) for these and other reports in this statistical series.

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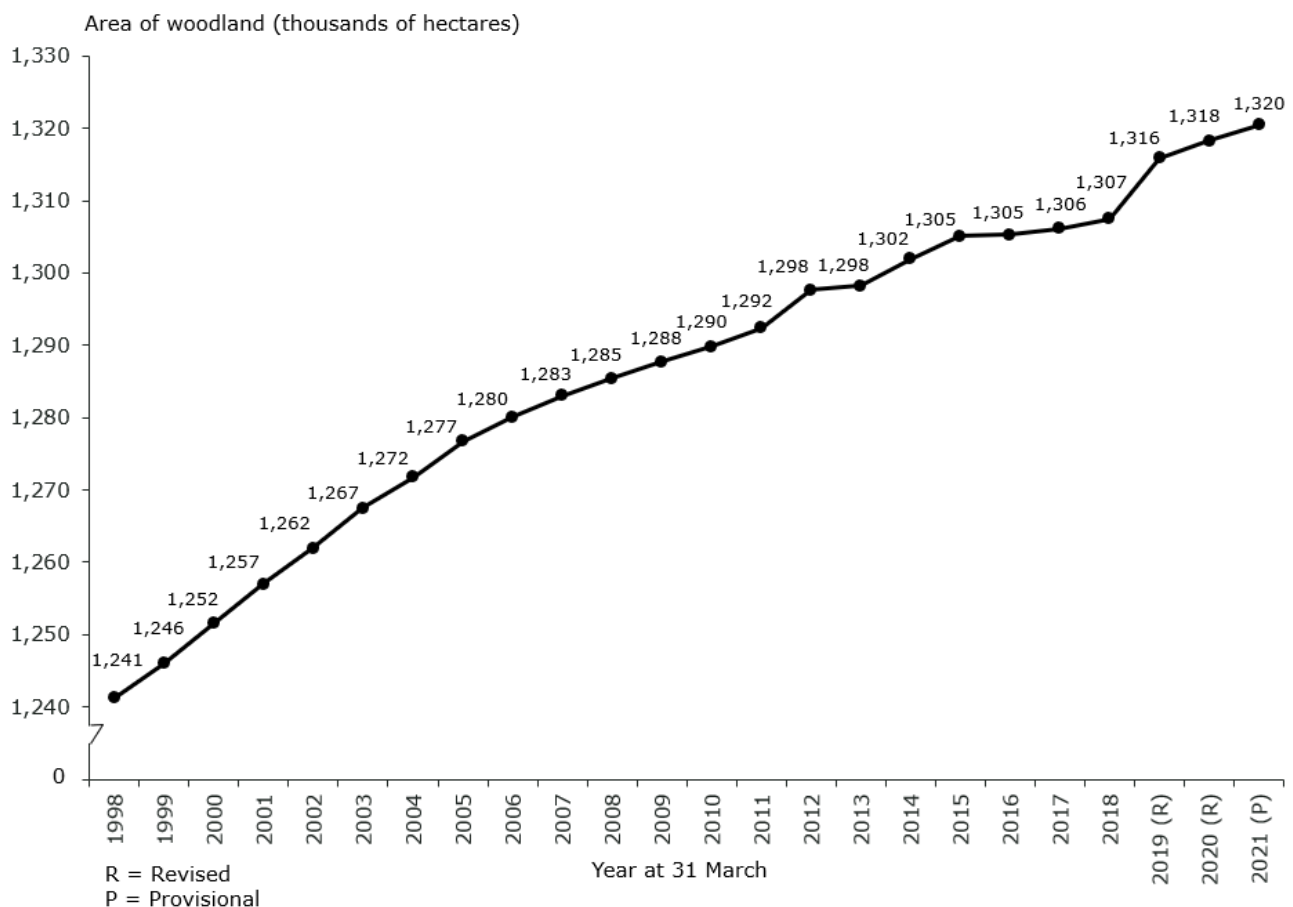
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10 August 2021

Forest Services Headline Key Performance Indicators

Expansion of woodland

Area of woodland in England



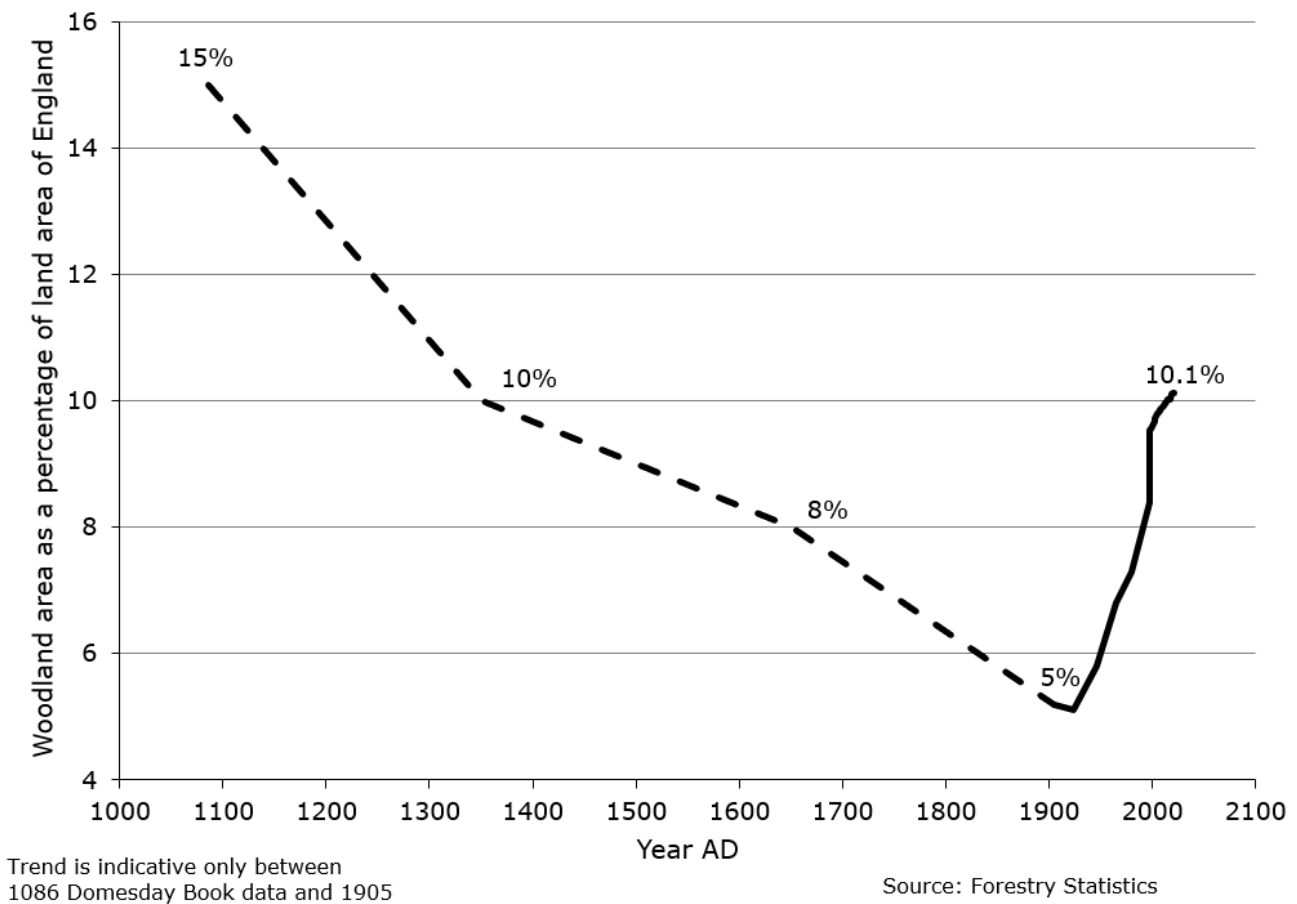
Source: [Forestry Statistics 2020](#) and [Provisional Woodland Statistics 2021](#) (Forest Research), based mainly on the [National Forest Inventory](#) and Forestry Commission administrative data.

Reports for this indicator are published annually. Provisional figures are published in Provisional Woodland Statistics in June, and confirmed figures are published in Forestry Statistics in September. Our most recent report as at 31 March 2021 was included in our annual *Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Report for 2020-21* and is as follows⁵.

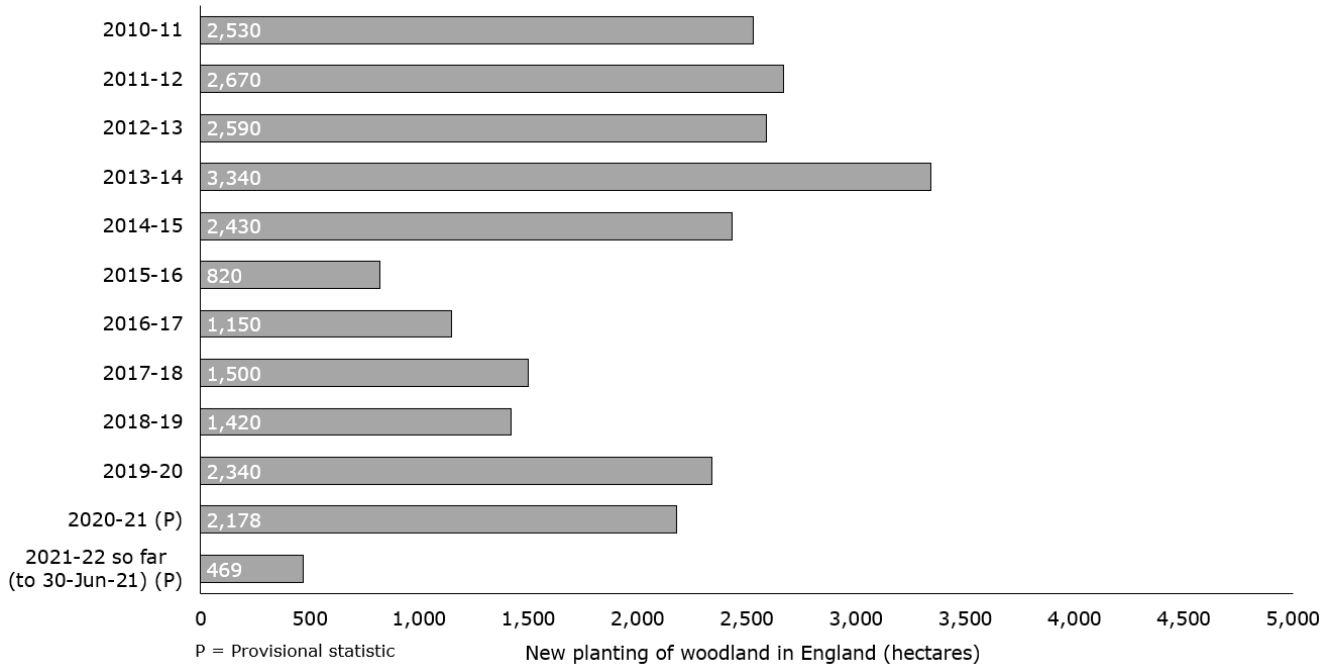
⁵ Forestry Commission (2021) *Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Report for 2020-21*, Bristol: Forestry Commission, Bristol: Forestry Commission, 68 pages, at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forestry-commission-key-performance-indicators-report-for-2020-21>

The area of woodland in England is 1,320 thousand hectares at 31 March 2021 (provisional figure). The March 2021 figure is an increase of 2 thousand hectares on the previous year, and the total is 10.1% of the land area of England. Woodland area figures at March 2019 and at March 2020 have been revised from those provided in Forestry Statistics 2020 to take account of updates to the National Forest Inventory woodland area map. The large increase in woodland area reported for 2019 results from updated analysis of remote sensing data revealed an additional 7,000 hectares of woodland in England. Confirmation or revision of the 2021 figure is scheduled to be published in Forestry Statistics 2021 (Forest Research) on 30 September 2021.

Figure 1: Long-term trend in woodland as a percentage of land area of England



New planting of woodland and trees in England



Source: [Forestry Statistics 2020](#) and [Provisional Woodland Statistics 2021](#) (Forest Research) and Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators.

An area of 469 hectares of new planting of woodland in England was reported for the first quarter of 2021-22. The area planted with support from Countryside Stewardship is broadly comparable with that reported for the same period in the previous three years published in our previous headline indicator updates that enumerated new planting with this specific support. Further comparisons are not possible at this stage of the year, as this wider indicator has not been published previously for the first quarter. It should also be noted that this may only be a partial picture of tree planting, as returns have not been submitted by all partners and given the seasonal nature of tree planting.

Table 2: New planting of woodland and trees in England, by source, 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021: provisional statistics

New planting of woodland and trees in England		Apr 2021 to Jun 2021 Area of woodland in hectares	Apr 2021 to Jun 2021 Equivalent in number of trees
Government-supported new planting of trees in England			
1	Rural Development Programme for England: CS and EWGS woodland creation	255	442,000
2	England Woodland Creation Offer	..	..
3	Woodland Carbon Fund	145	370,000
4	High Speed 2 Woodland Fund	36	61,000
5	Forestry England	0	1,000
6	Countryside Stewardship: other tree planting options	32	52,000
7	Environment Agency	..	..
8	Northern Forest	0	0
9	National Forest Company	0	0
10	Ministry of Defence	..	..
11	Highways England	..	..
12	Urban Tree Challenge Fund	0	0
13	Community Forests	..	..
Total Government-supported new planting of trees in England		469	926,000
1	Recorded new planting of woodland and trees in England supported by other organisations	..	..
Total new planting of woodland and trees in England		469 hectares	926,000 trees

Notes to Table 2:

- Figures include trees in areas counting as woodland and some tree cover outside woodland.
- .. denotes no data for this period.
- The density of tree planting, in numbers of trees planted per hectare of land, varies between planting schemes.
- Areas of woodland are rounded to the nearest hectare and tree numbers approximate and to the nearest 1,000 trees.
- Figures may not sum due to rounding.
- CS means Countryside Stewardship and EWGS is the former English Woodland Grant Scheme.
- It is anticipated that future reports will include returns from other organisations' new planting of woodland and trees in England.

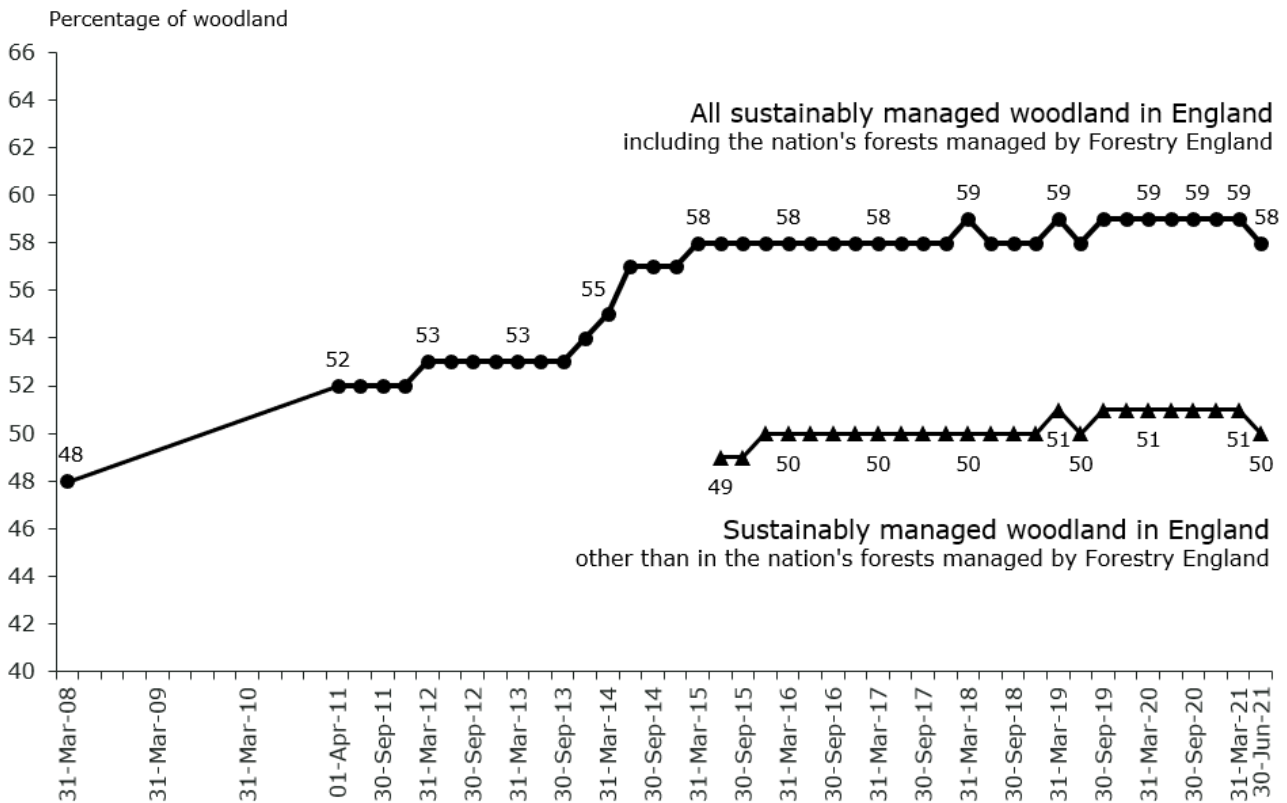
This indicator on **all** new planting of woodland and trees in England includes reporting of new planting that is either supported by Government or that supported by other organisations.

It therefore builds on and incorporates the most recent reports of the *Government supported new planting of trees in England* key performance indicator. The most recent full report of that indicator was for the full 2019-20 year⁶. All previous reports for that indicator, including details of the methodology of what is included, can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/forestry-commission-corporate-plan-performance-indicators>

⁶ Forestry Commission (2020) *Government supported new planting of trees in England: Report for 2019-20*. Bristol: Forestry Commission, 10 pages. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/government-supported-new-planting-of-trees-in-england-report-for-2019-20>

Improvement of woodland

Percentage of woodland that is sustainably managed

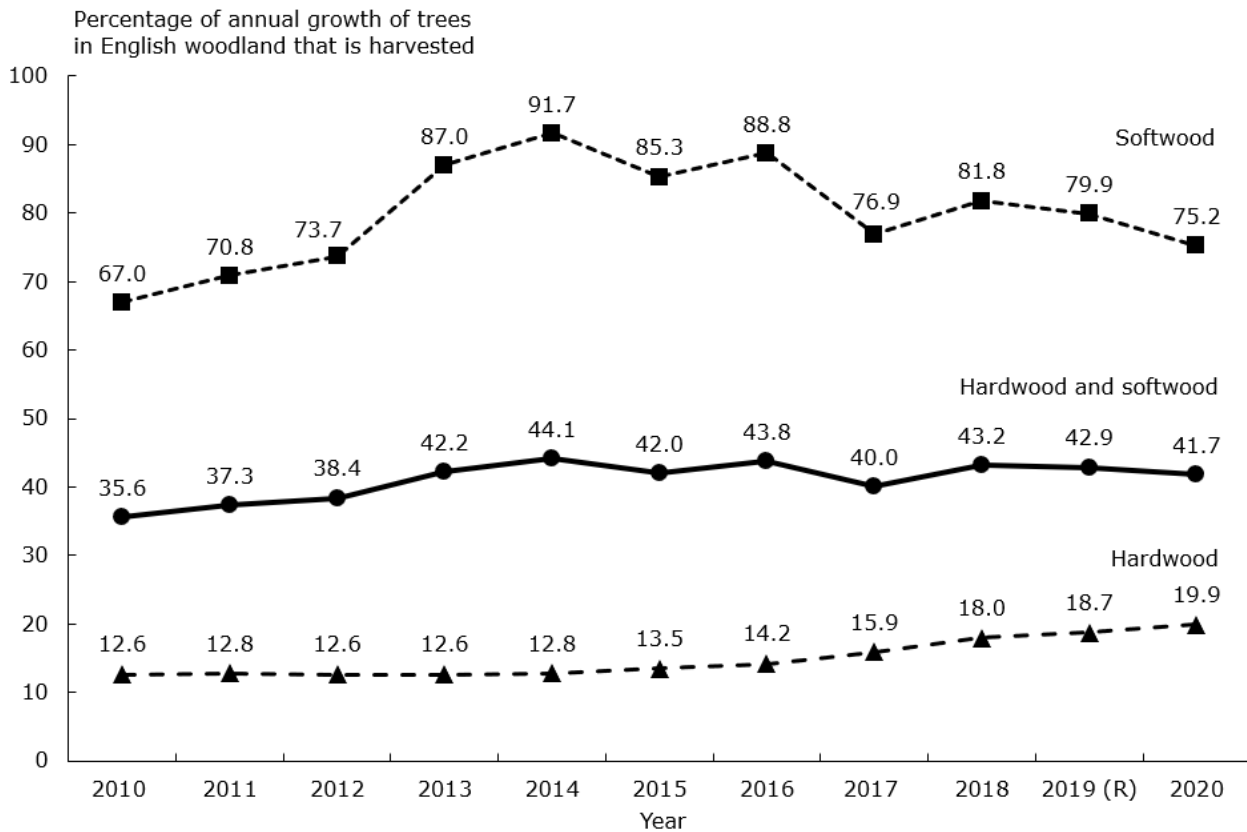


Source: Forestry Commission administrative data and the [National Forest Inventory](#) (Forest Research).

As at 30 June 2021, 58% of all woodland in England was sustainably managed; totalling 764,000 hectares of woodland in management (at this date, when rounded). The equivalent figure for woodland other than in the nation's forests was 51%, totalling 550,000 hectares of woodland in management. Our definition of 'sustainably managed' is woodland managed to the UK Forestry Standard that has a Woodland Management Plan, or for which we have made a previous grant of felling licence in the last 15 years. It also includes all woodland in the nation's forests managed by Forestry England and all woodland on Defence Infrastructure Organisation training areas. It is recognised that other woodland might also be considered as managed.

The percentage of woodland that is sustainably managed has decreased slightly to 58% since last quarter. Evidence suggests markets for timber remain relatively strong. There is scope to further increase the area of woodland sustainably managed to meet demand for UK grown timber, to help manage tree pests and diseases, and to improve woodland resilience.

Percentage of the annual growth of trees in English woodlands that is harvested



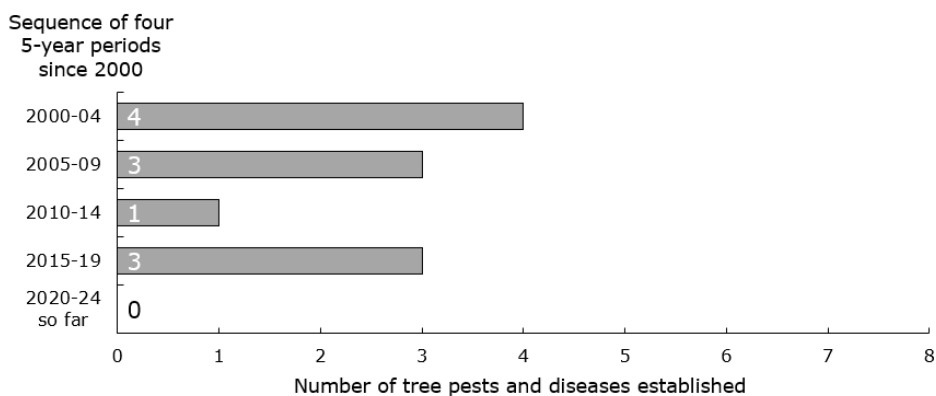
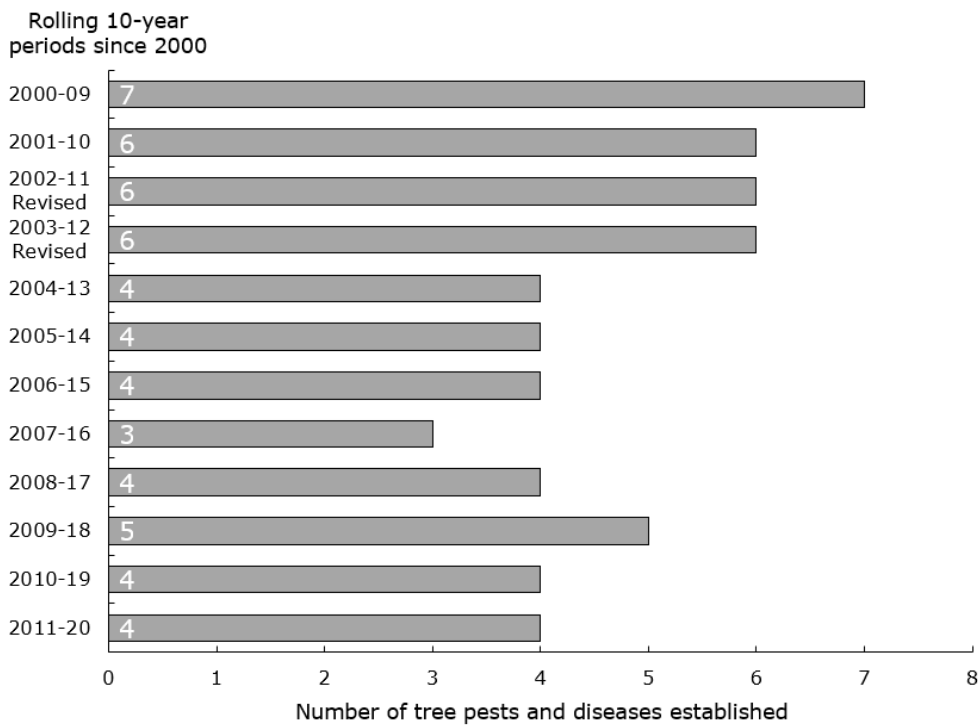
Source: Forest Research statistics on [UK wood production and trade](#) and [National Forest Inventory](#) team forecasts.

Reports for this indicator are published annually. Our most recent report is for the 2020 year and was included in our annual *Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Report for 2020-21* and is as follows.

There is an opportunity to considerably increase the hardwood harvest if new markets are developed. The proportion of softwood annual increment that is harvested remains high, reflecting strong demand and also the age structure of the conifer woodland resource.

Protection of woodland

Number of additional tree pests and diseases becoming established in England within a rolling 10-year period



Source: Forestry Commission administrative data.

Reports for this indicator are published annually. Our most recent report is for the 2020 year and was included in our annual *Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Report for 2020-21* and is as follows.

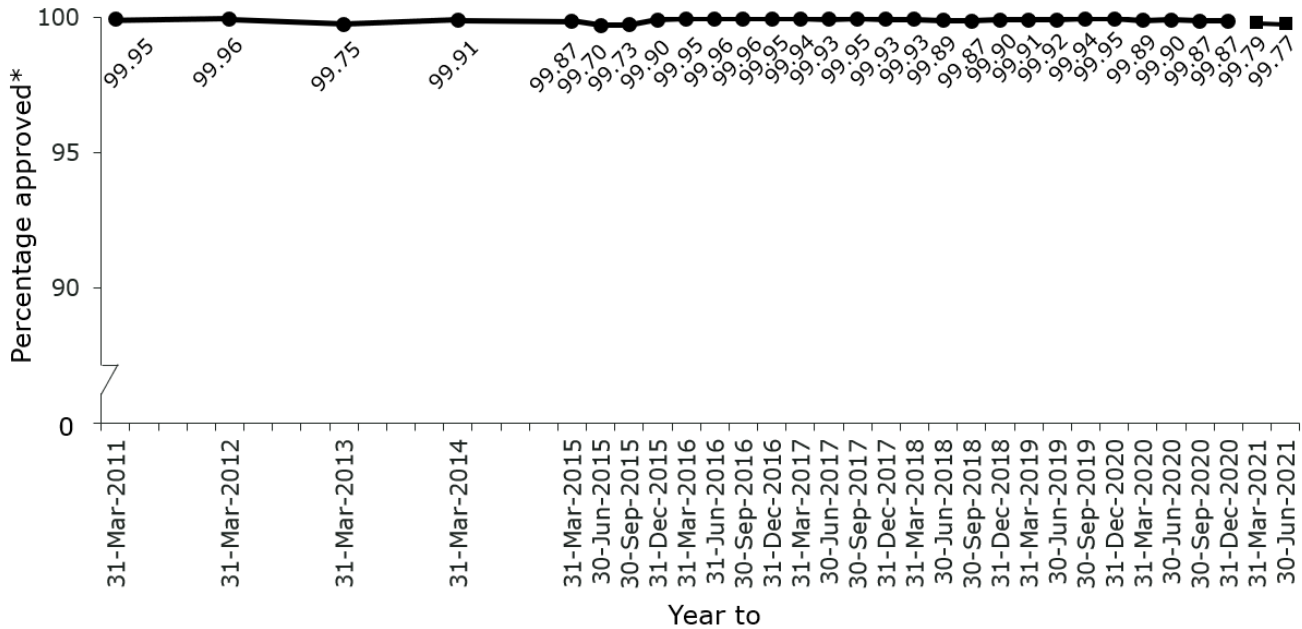
The number of additional tree pests and diseases becoming established in England within a rolling ten-year period fell from a peak of seven in the ten-year period 2000-09 to a low of three in 2007-16.

Four tree pests and diseases became 'established' in England in the most recent ten-year period 2011-20, namely:

1. Chalara dieback of ash (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) considered established in 2012. Ash dieback is present in most parts of the United Kingdom and continues to spread. New planting for replacement of trees lost is included in the support offered by the Local Authority Treescapes Fund.
2. Oriental chestnut gall wasp considered established in 2016. This is a larval pest of sweet chestnut trees present with a distribution limited to southern England and the Midlands. Research is underway to investigate potential biological control of this pest.
3. Sweet chestnut blight caused by the fungus *Cryphonectria parasitica*, has been identified at a number of sites in England where it is under official control. Ongoing surveillance has identified new outbreak sites in Kent and Nottinghamshire.
4. Elm zigzag sawfly (*Aproceros leucopoda*), considered established in 2018, and continuing to spread in southeast England and the east Midlands.

There are other tree pests and diseases, some of which have become established in England. These include for example *Phytophthora ramorum* considered established in 2003, with a limited distribution, and under official control to reduce the spread and intensity (see Map 2). Information on a range of forestry pests in England is available from the pest and disease resources webpage provided by Forest Research.

Percentage of known tree felling carried out with Forestry Commission approval



Source: Forestry Commission administrative data.

Note: Reports of this indicator for the year to 31 March 2021 and onwards will be based on the date that the application was approved to more accurately reflect the small proportion of applications that are amended, withdrawn or refused.

Report for year to 30 June 2021: 99.77% of known tree felling was carried out with Forestry Commission approval.

The overall figure of legal felling remains at a consistently very high level.