Forestry Commission

Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators

Headline Performance Update
30 September 2024

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Headline Performance Update
at 30 September 2024

Contents

Introduction

1. The Forestry Commission are government's forestry and woodland experts and increase the value of woodlands to society and the environment.

2. Our three goals describe what needs to happen to bring about the vision and are set out in Thriving for the Future: Forestry Commission Strategy 2023-28[1]. The goals are:
   - Goal 1: More trees, more diverse species, growing and thriving
   - Goal 2: Better managed woods & forests that are protected and improving
   - Goal 3: Bigger benefits for nature, climate, people and the economy

3. This Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Headline Performance Update at 30 September 2024 report contains our mid-year interim update report on our corporate performance in the first half of 2024-25.

4. The Forestry Commission publishes a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) to highlight our contribution to our goals and to show barometers of trends in the wider forestry sector in England. The Forestry Commission has ten headline indicators and the most up-to-date report on each of these is in this document. The new indicator on resilient tree species becoming established is currently being developed. In addition Forestry England have six headline indicators and there are 23 further indicators for Forest Services. The full set of KPIs were most recently reported in the Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Report for 2023-24, published[2] in June 2024.

5. Our use of indicators also reflects our commitment to evidence-based working, and to ensuring that there are robust data available to the forestry sector to underpin policies and operational decisions.

6. Produced with a view to adhering to the standards of the Code of Practice for Statistics this is an Official Statistics publication. Further information is available from the Forestry Commission key performance indicators web pages on gov.uk.

Economics, Evidence and Analysis
Strategy and Transformation
Forest Services
Forestry Commission

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12 November 2024

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[1] Forestry Commission (2023) Thriving for the Future: Forestry Commission Strategy 2023-28, 44 pages, at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/forestry-commission-strategy-2023-2028

[2] Forestry Commission (2024) Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Report for 2023-24, Bristol: Forestry Commission, 54 pages, at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forestry-commission-key-performance-indicators-report-for-2023-24

Forestry Commission headline indicator updates

Goal one: More trees, more diverse species, growing and thriving

New planting of woodland and trees in England
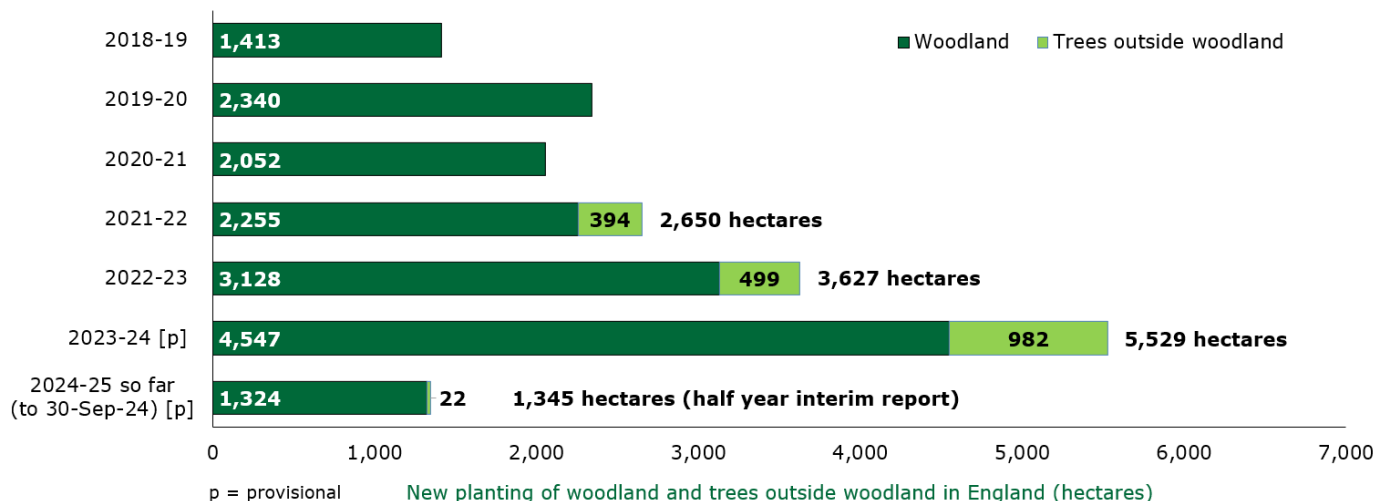
Notes: Statistics to 2020-21 are for new planting of woodland; from 2021-22 onwards for woodland and trees outside woodland. Statistics in the bar chart may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Forestry Statistics 2024 (Forest Research) and Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators.

7. An area of 1,324 hectares of new woodland creation in England was reported in the first six months of 2024-25, an almost identical area for the same period in 2023-24. In addition, Government supported the planting of 24,000 trees outside woodland (approximately 22 hectares). Total new creation of woodland and planting of trees in England in the first half of 2023-24 was therefore 1,345 hectares (approximately 2,207,000 trees). As with previous years, the report includes trees planted during the 2023-24 planting season. England Woodland Creation Offer funded tree planting is reported once claims have been received and approved and this generally extends into the six months following the winter planting season. By contrast, other tree planting such as that by the England Community Forests is reported in total when the planting takes place and this usually aligns with financial years.

Table 1: New planting of woodland and trees in England, 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024

New planting of woodland by type of support	Area of woodland newly planted, 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 (hectares)	Area of woodland newly planted, 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 (equivalent in number of trees)
Woodland[1,2]		
Government-supported		
Countryside Stewardship woodland	7	12,000
England Woodland Creation Offer[3]	1,177	1,829,000
High Speed 2 Woodland Fund	22	39,000
Forestry England	79	227,000
Countryside Stewardship: other tree planting options	23	37,000
Environment Agency	x	x
Northern Forest	0	0
National Forest Company	16	39,000
Community Forests[3]	0	0
Forest for Cornwall	x	x
Great Northumberland Forest	0	0
Sub-total Government-supported	**1,324**	**2,183,000**
Other support and non-governmental organisations		
Woodland Carbon Guarantee	0	0
Woodland Trust	0	0
Sub-total	**0**	**0**
Total woodland	**1,324 hectares of woodland**	**2,183,000 trees within woodland**

Table 1 continued

New planting of trees outside woodland by type of support	Area of woodland newly planted, 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 (hectares)	Area of woodland newly planted, 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 (equivalent in number of trees)
Trees outside woodland[1,2]		
Government-supported		
Countryside Stewardship single trees	14	11,000
England Woodland Creation Offer	3	4,000
Forestry England	1	4,000
Environment Agency	x	x
Northern Forest	0	0
National Forest Company	0	0
Community Forests	0	0
Coronation Living Heritage Fund	0	0
Forest for Cornwall	x	x
Great Northumberland Forest	2	3,000
National Health Service Forest	2	1,000
Local Authority Treescapes Fund	x	x
Urban Tree Challenge Fund	x	x
Total trees outside woodland	Approx. 22 hectares	**24,000 trees outside woodland**
Total woodland and trees outside woodland[4]	Approx. 1,345 hectares within and outside woodland	**2,207,000 trees within and outside woodland**

Notes to Table 1 are on the next page.

Notes to Table 1:

1. Statistics for woodland are for planting that is estimated to meet the National Forest Inventory (NFI) definition of woodland, namely as land with a minimum area of 0.5 hectare under stands of trees, and tree crown cover of at least 20%, or the potential to achieve this. The minimum width for woodland is 20 metres. Where necessary estimates for trees outside woodland have been converted to an approximate equivalent area in hectares based on the Trees and Woodland Scientific Advisory Group's advice of an assumed stocking density of 800 trees to 1 hectare.

2. 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 are approximate and rounded to the nearest 1,000 trees. Statistics in the table may not sum due to rounding. The table includes our best estimates of new planting where data are available for the first half of the year. [x] denotes no report of new planting is available. We currently expect returns for these additional sources of new planting later on as a full annual return for the complete 2024-25 year.

3. England Woodland Creation Offer funded tree planting is reported once claims have been received and approved and this generally extends into the six months following the winter planting season. By contrast, other tree planting such as that by the England Community Forests is reported in total when the planting takes place and this usually aligns with financial years.

4. This indicator at present includes returns received for new planting either supported by government or that facilitated by the Woodland Carbon Guarantee or supported by the Woodland Trust. It is anticipated that future reports will include other new planting in England.

Goal two: Better managed woods & forests that are protected and improving

Proportion of woodland in England sustainably managed
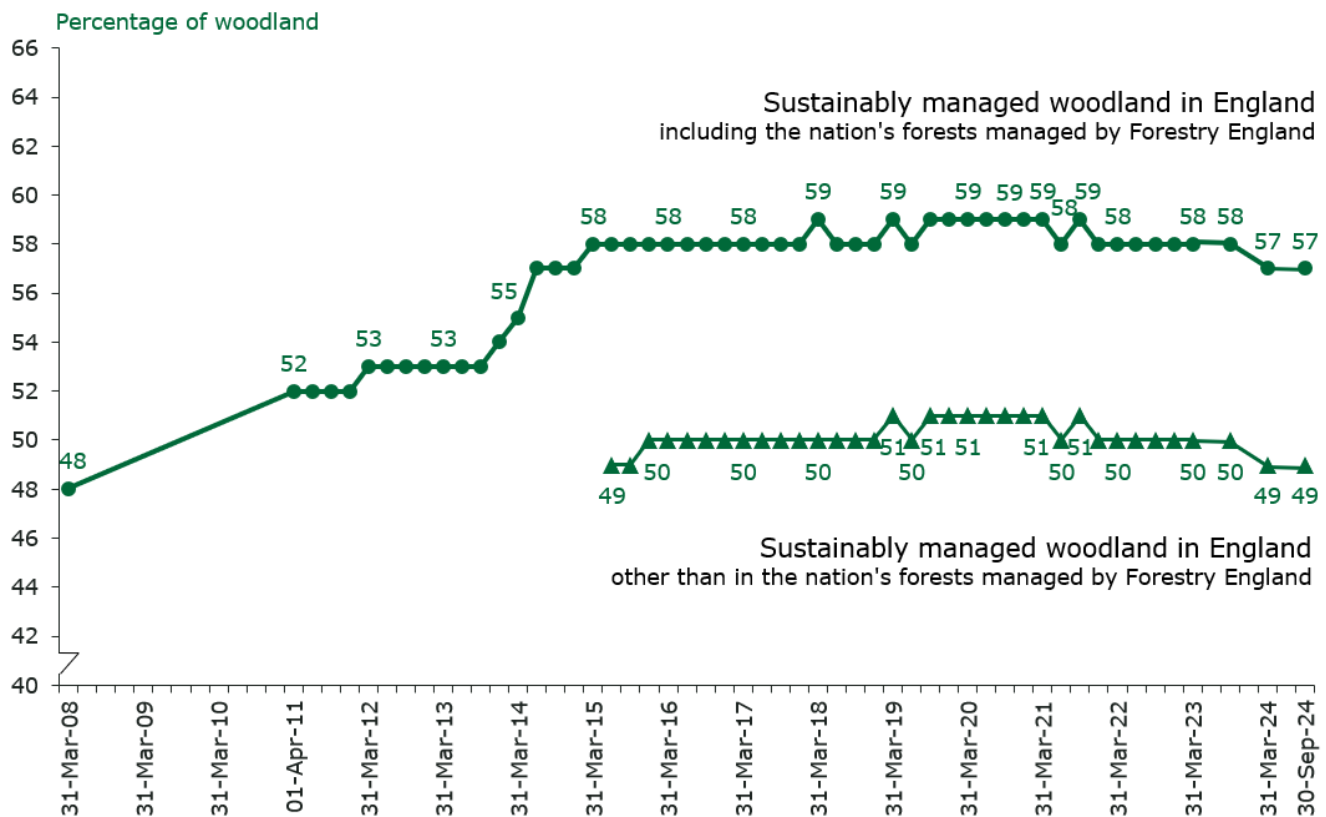
Source: Forestry Commission administrative data and the National Forest Inventory (Forest Research).

8. As at 30 September 2024, 57% of all woodland in England was considered sustainably managed; totalling 758,000 hectares of woodland in management (at this date, when rounded).

9. Our definition of 'sustainably managed' is woodland managed to the UK Forestry Standard that has a valid 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 be considered as managed as well but are not captured in these numbers.

Number of pests and diseases becoming established

Rolling 10-year periods since 2000

Period	Number of tree pests and diseases established
2000-09	7
2001-10	6
2002-11 [r]	6
2003-12 [r]	6
2004-13	4
2005-14	4
2006-15	4
2007-16	3
2008-17	4
2009-18	5
2010-19	4
2011-20	4
2012-21	4
2013-22	3
2014-23	3

Sequence of 5-year periods since 2000

Period	Number of tree pests and diseases established
2000-04	4
2005-09	3
2010-14	1
2015-19	3
2020-24	0
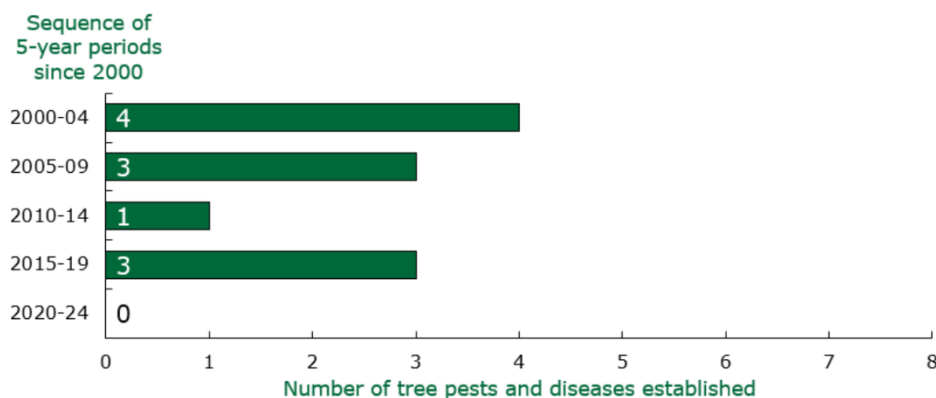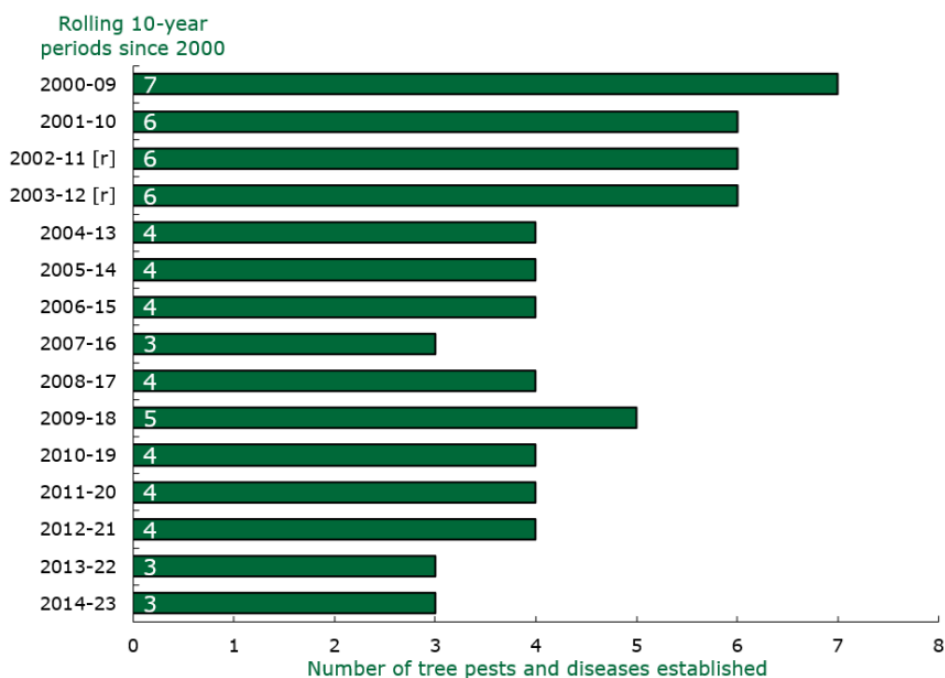
Source: Forestry Commission administrative data.

10. Updates to this indicator are reported annually[3]. The most recent report is as follows.

11. In the most recent ten-year period (2014-23), three tree pests and diseases became 'established' in England. These are Oriental chestnut gall wasp, elm zigzag sawfly and sweet chestnut blight (SCB). Sweet chestnut trees are monitored through a surveillance programme and in 2023 about 22,440 sweet chestnut trees were surveyed across 160 survey sites in England and about 2,954 trees were surveyed at a further 16 fixed observation plots in England and Wales. Any sites infected with SCB are subject to appropriate management action including monitoring and the approach remains one of containment and supporting steps towards eradication wherever practical to do so.

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[3] Forestry Commission (2024) Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Report for 2023-24, Bristol: Forestry Commission, 54 pages, at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forestry-commission-key-performance-indicators-report-for-2023-24

Proportion of known tree felling in England carried out with Forestry Commission approval

Percentage approved

Source: Forestry Commission administrative data.

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

Goal three: Bigger benefits for nature, climate, people and the economy

Carbon captured by England's woodland

Million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO$_2$e)
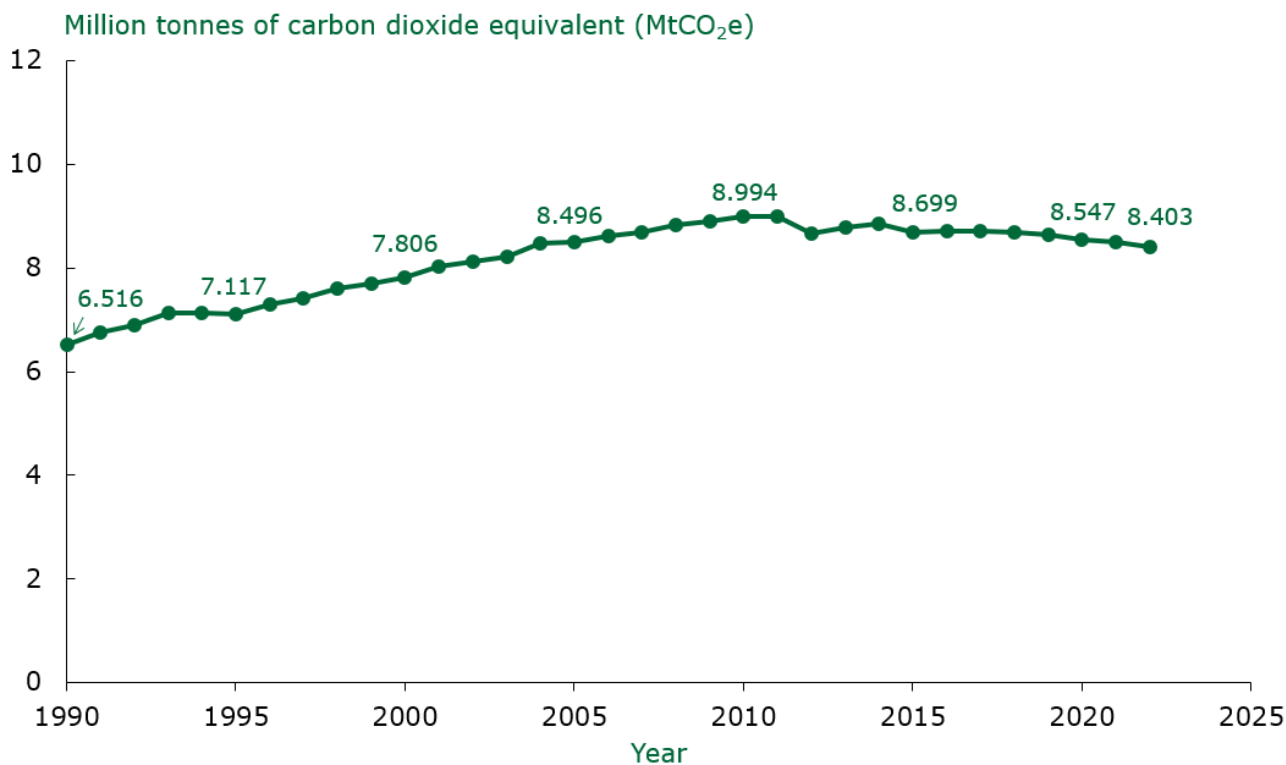
Source: Data from the UK greenhouse gas emissions statistics (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero).

13. Updates to this indicator are reported annually. The most recent report is as follows.

14. The net greenhouse gas sink strength of England's woodlands has decreased slightly from 8.505 MtCO2e in 2021 to 8.403 MtCO2e in 2022 (based on the updated time-series), but remains broadly stable; however, it is expected to decline in the medium term as a large proportion of woodland created around the same time reach harvesting stage. A removal (or sink) of 8.403 MtCO2e is equivalent to 2.1% of total UK greenhouse gas emissions for 2022, or 17.6% of agricultural emissions (see Table 1.2 of the Final UK greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions national statistics 1990-2022 for total GHG emissions and agricultural emissions).

Natural Capital Value of England's forests and woodlands

Natural capital asset value

Year	Value
2017 (at 2018 prices)	66,213
2020 (at 2021 prices)	231,607
2021 (at 2022 prices)	253,111

Woodland ecosystem asset value in England (£ million)

Source: Woodland natural capital accounts, UK: 2024 (Office for National Statistics, 2024).

15. The Office for National Statistics' woodland natural capital accounts 2024 identify that as a result of changes in methodology and an expanding portfolio of natural services measured, this latest account cannot be compared with previous years' accounts on a like-for-like basis. Additional natural services enumerated since the 2017 data include health benefits of recreation and tourism expenditure. The overall value of natural capital from England's woodlands is estimated at £253bn. Forestry Statistics 2023 (Forest Research) indicate an increasing area of woodland in England, associated with new planting.

Ecological condition of woodland in England
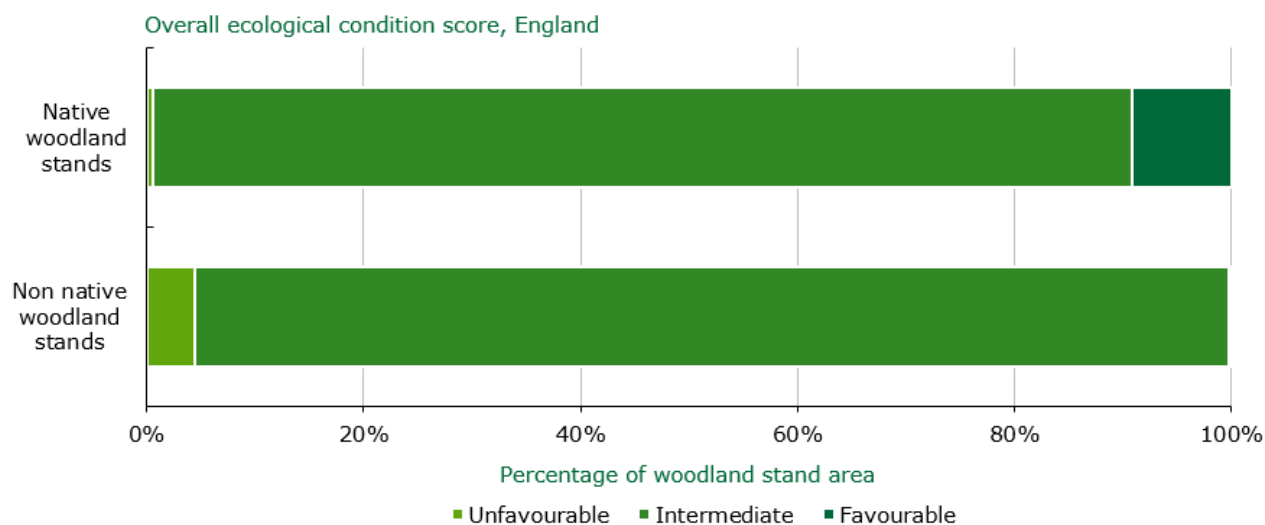
Source: Forestry Commission (2020) NFI woodland ecological condition in England: classification results, National Forest Inventory.

16. There is a baseline for this indicator. There are 914,000 hectares of native woodland in England (around 68% of all woodland) and 398,000 hectares of non-native woodland (30%) and 29,000 hectares near native and fragments (2%) plus a small amount not determinable. 99.5% of native woodland, and 95.6% of non-native woodland, is in favourable or intermediate condition, based on the latest available National Forest Inventory (2010-15) survey cycle data (Figure 8).

17. Up to 2020, the Biodiversity Strategy interim reporting of condition drew on the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) data and area of priority habitat in management to indicate progress against Biodiversity 2020 targets. In early 2020 work concluded to analyse and agree the condition status of England's woodland. Fifteen ecological condition indicators were measured as part of the National Forest Inventory survey cycle 2010-15 and compared to a benchmark of a stand of ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) in good condition. This enabled native, near native and non-native woodland stands (outside of protected sites) to be classified as favourable, intermediate or unfavourable in terms of their ecological condition for the first time.

18. Ten reports were published in 2020 in relation to woodland ecological condition; executive summary, methodology, statistics and classification results, by country and for Great Britain. These reports and data can be found on the National Forest Inventory Woodland Ecological Condition pages of the Forest Research website.

Figure 1: The proportion of each woodland ecological condition (WEC) class, for each WEC indicator type in native woodland stands in England
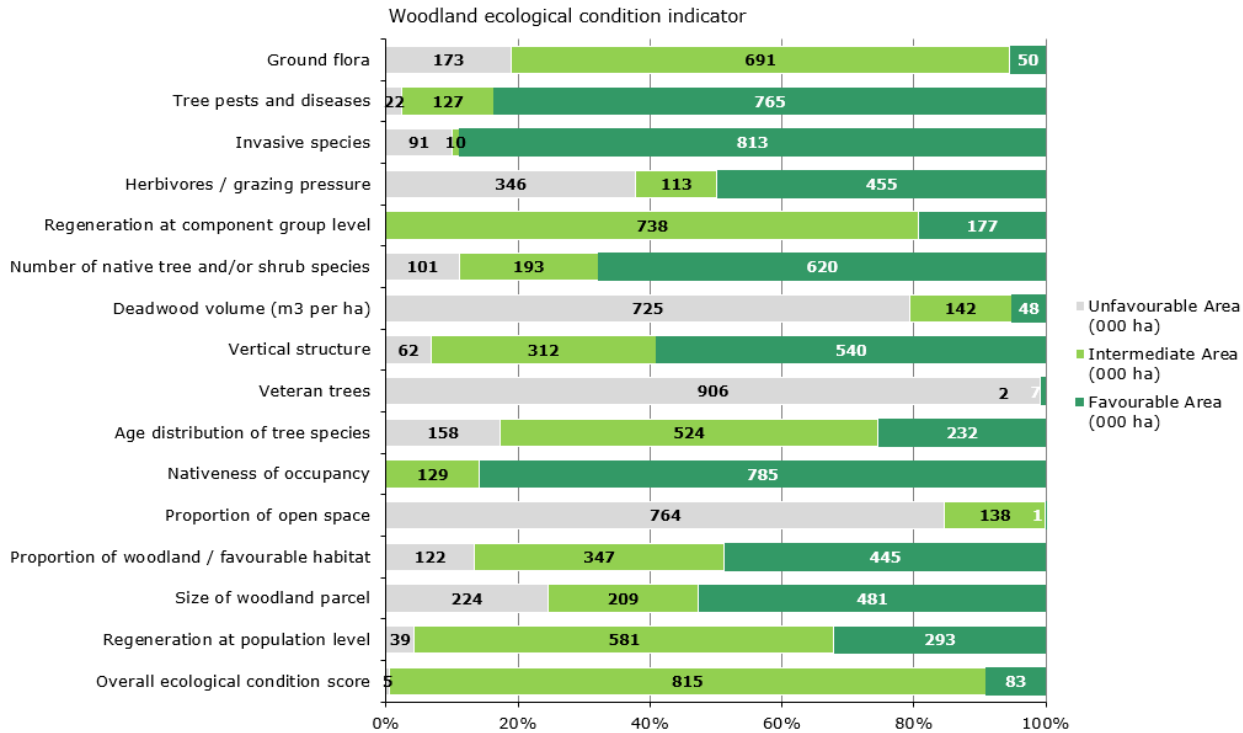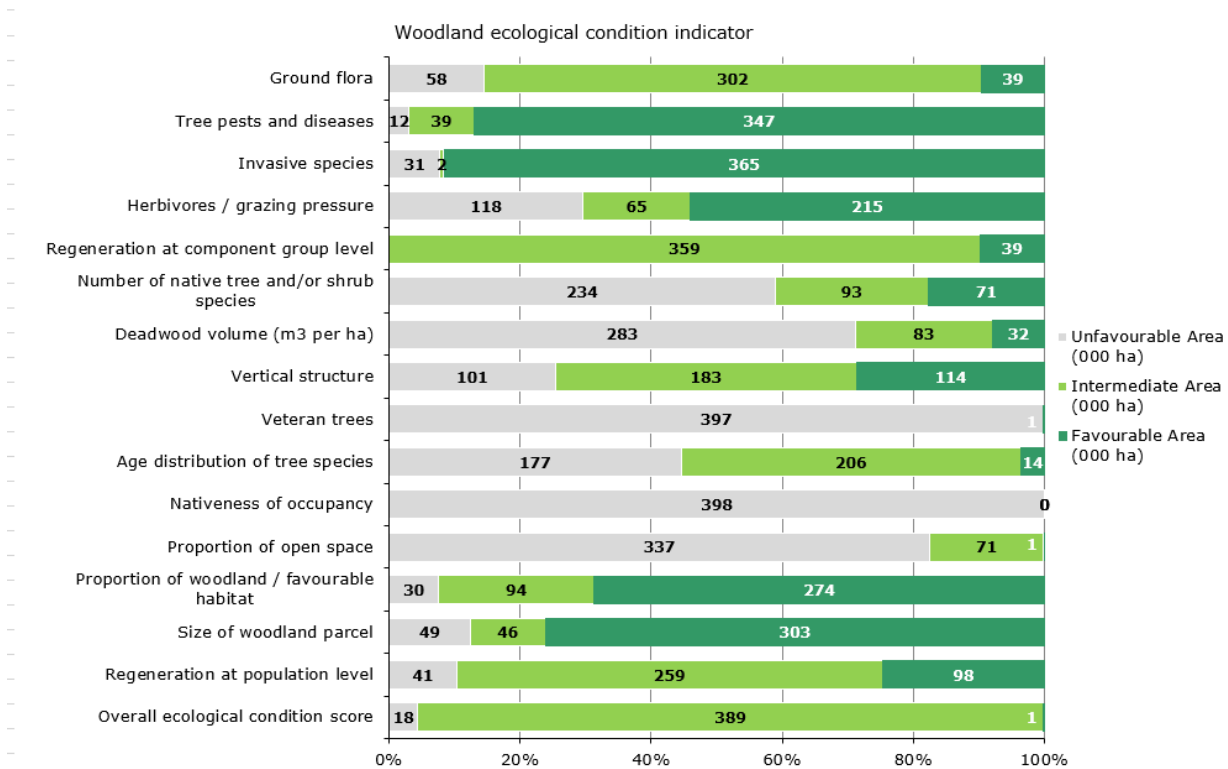
Woodland ecological condition indicator

Indicator	Unfavourable	Intermediate	Favourable
Ground flora	173	691	50
Tree pests and diseases	22	127	765
Invasive species	91	10	813
Herbivores / grazing pressure	346	113	455
Regeneration at component group level		738	177
Number of native tree and/or shrub species	101	193	620
Deadwood volume (m3 per ha)	725	142	48
Vertical structure	62	312	540
Veteran trees	906	2	7
Age distribution of tree species	158	524	232
Nativeness of occupancy		129	785
Proportion of open space	764	138	1
Proportion of woodland / favourable habitat	122	347	445
Size of woodland parcel	224	209	481
Regeneration at population level	39	581	293
Overall ecological condition score	5	815	83

Legend:
- Unfavourable Area (000 ha)
- Intermediate Area (000 ha)
- Favourable Area (000 ha)

Figure 2: The proportion of each woodland ecological condition (WEC) class, for each WEC indicator type in non-native woodland stands in England

Woodland ecological condition indicator

Indicator	Unfavourable	Intermediate	Favourable
Ground flora	58	302	39
Tree pests and diseases	12	39	347
Invasive species	31	2	365
Herbivores / grazing pressure	118	65	215
Regeneration at component group level		359	39
Number of native tree and/or shrub species	234	93	71
Deadwood volume (m3 per ha)	283	83	32
Vertical structure	101	183	114
Veteran trees	397		1
Age distribution of tree species	177	206	14
Nativeness of occupancy	398		0
Proportion of open space	337	71	1
Proportion of woodland / favourable habitat	30	94	274
Size of woodland parcel	49	46	303
Regeneration at population level	41	259	98
Overall ecological condition score	18	389	1

Legend:
- Unfavourable Area (000 ha)
- Intermediate Area (000 ha)
- Favourable Area (000 ha)

Notes on woodland ecological condition in England

Note 1: Native woodland

Native woodland is defined as stands with 50% or more native tree species occupancy in the upper canopy that either:

- form a discrete woodland parcel with a minimum area of 0.5 ha.
- form a woodland stand with a minimum area of 0.1 ha that is part of a woodland that is 0.5 ha or larger.

Note 2: Non-native woodland

Non-native woodland is defined as stands with less than 40% native tree species occupancy sitting within a woodland of any size.

Note 3: Near native and fragments

Near native and fragments: Stands that fail to meet the criteria for native or non-native woodland specified above are classified as 'near native and fragments'.
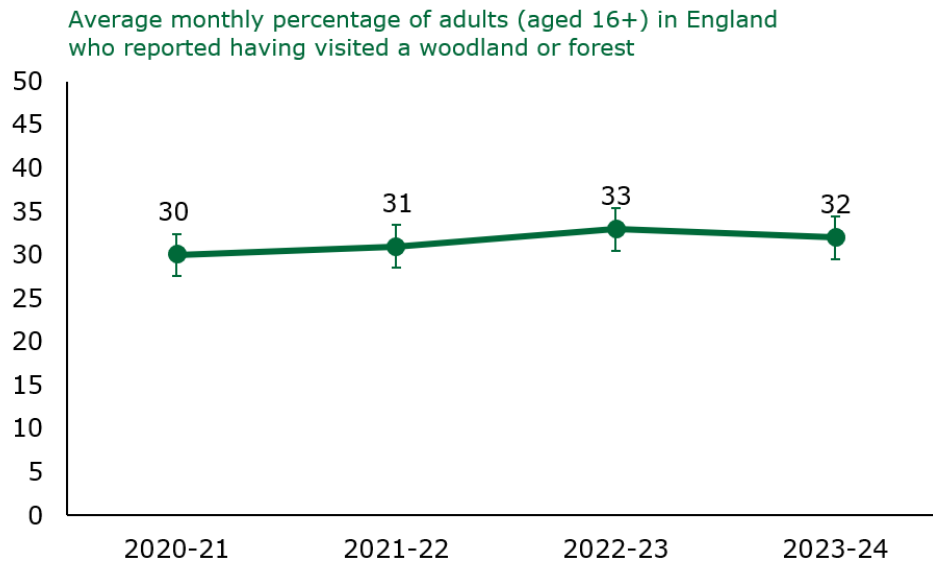
Note 4: Definition of the indicators:

The woodland ecological condition classification categories and indicators are defined in the methodology report: Forestry Commission (2020), NFI woodland ecological condition in Great Britain: Methodology National Forest Inventory.

Note 5: Classifications for each indicator and overall scoring

The National Forest Inventory woodland condition classifications for each of the 15 separate WEC indicators shown are shown in the Table 11.1 classification threshold summary (page 32) in the NFI woodland ecological condition in England: classification results. This also shows the overall scores that determine whether woodland habitat is in unfavourable, intermediate or favourable condition.

Proportion of adults in England who visited a forest or woodland

Average monthly percentage of adults (aged 16+) in England
who reported having visited a woodland or forest

Source: People and Nature Survey for England (Natural England).

19. Visits to woodland remain above the 2020-21 level of 30% although this increase is not statistically significant. There was a marginal decrease between 2022-23 and 2023-24 but this is not considered statistically significant.

Gross Value Added of forestry sector for the economy in England

Approximate gross value added (England, £ million)
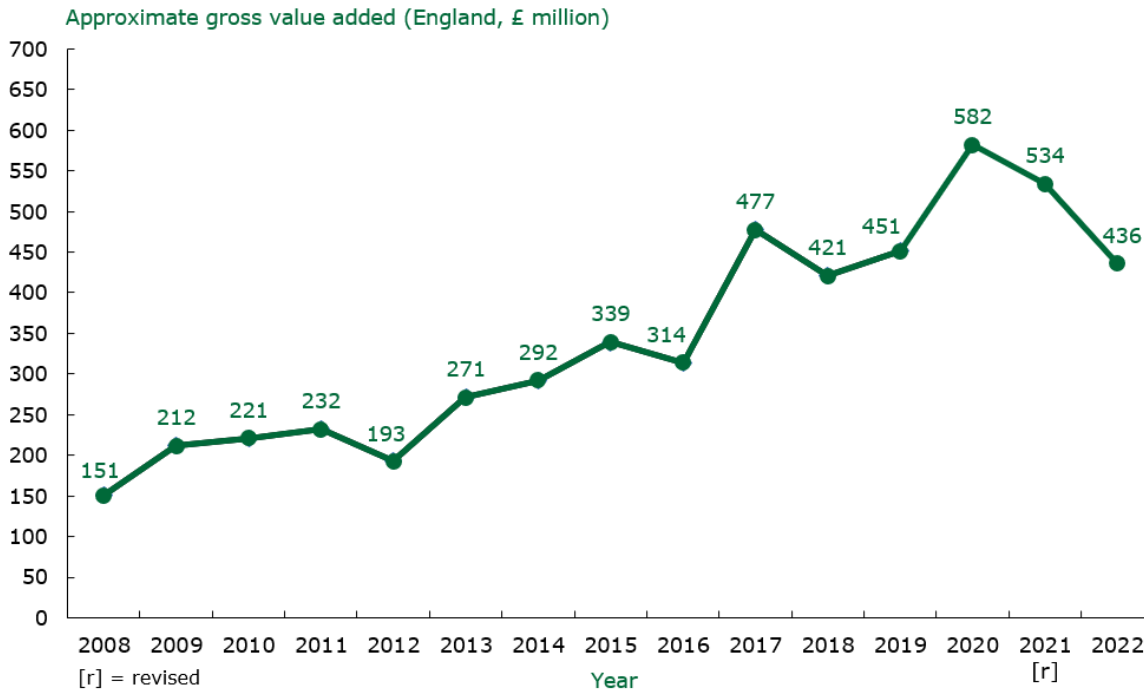
Source: Annual Business Survey 2022 (Office for National Statistics).

20. Domestic political instability in this period created negative effects in the UK house-construction market with implications for timber sales and the Gross Value Added from forestry.

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