Tairāwhiti Forestry & Wood Processing Employment Survey
February 2026
Eastland Wood Council – Te Kaunihera Pororākau o te Tairāwhiti

Introduction

The purpose of this survey was to better understand the workforce composition of the forestry and wood processing sector within Tairāwhiti as at February 2026.

This was achieved by identifying general roles and surveying organisations across the sector to gather the most current employment data possible. This survey provides a deeper understanding of the forestry and wood processing workforce within our region.

It is important to note that this is the first time that roles and the number of workers in each role have been identified in this way. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, this is not a complete picture due to time and communication constraints.

Regional employment figures from Trust Tairāwhiti list forestry employment at 545 in their Regional Economic Profile 2025. However, there is awareness of gaps in this Infometrics reporting data.

Both EWC and FICA acknowledge gaps in their listing data due to membership driven information. Additionally, the Ministry for Primary Industries – Te Uru Rākau reports regional figures combining Tairāwhiti with Hawke's Bay, limiting the ability to isolate Gisborne-specific data.

As a result, the decision was made to undertake an employment survey to close as many regional data gaps as possible.

Survey Scope and Methodology

Organisations contacted: 76

Responses received: 60

Response rate: 78.95%

Survey period: 2 Feb 2026-14 Feb 2026

Geographic scope: Businesses operating in Tairāwhiti

Businesses determined how their staff were categorised, meaning some classifications may differ if independently assessed.

Survey Response Rate – February 2026

No Response 21.1%

Responses Received 78.9%
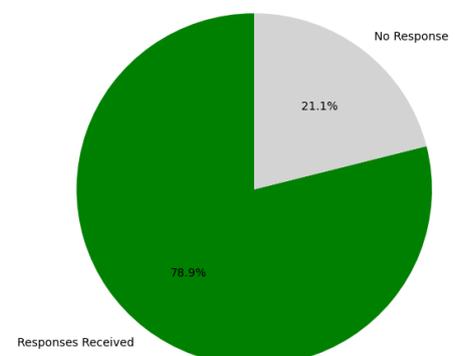
Survey Notes and Limitations

1. Civil, TTM, heavy haulage, and earthworks staff working both inside and outside the forest gate were not counted where specified.

2. Cross-checking was undertaken between principals and contractors wherever possible. Where confirmation was not possible, numbers were conservatively under-represented.

3. Contractors with forestry as a secondary business (e.g., some haulage operators) were not captured.

4. Contractors with staff not currently working (due to contract completion or paused harvesting operations) were not included.

Workforce Results

Role	Total Employees
Office	163
Silviculture	80
Cartage	201
Engineering	101
Harvesting	293
Clean Up	13
Wood Processing	172
Port Staff	65
Other (Remaining)	76
TOTAL	**1,155**

Tairāwhiti Forestry & Wood Processing Workforce by Role (Feb 2026)
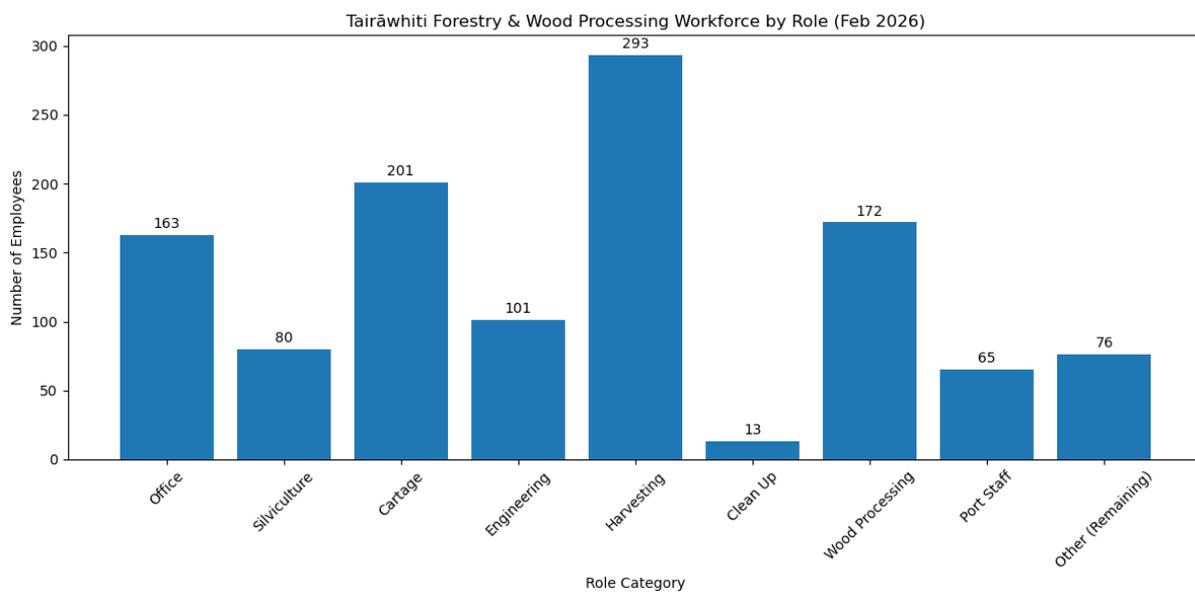
Workforce Distribution Analysis

Percentage Breakdown

Role	% of Workforce
Office	14.1%
Silviculture	6.9%
Cartage	17.4%
Engineering	8.7%
Harvesting	25.4%
Clean Up	1.1%
Wood Processing	14.9%
Port Staff	5.6%
Other (Remaining)	6.6%

Workforce Distribution by Role
Tairāwhiti – February 2026
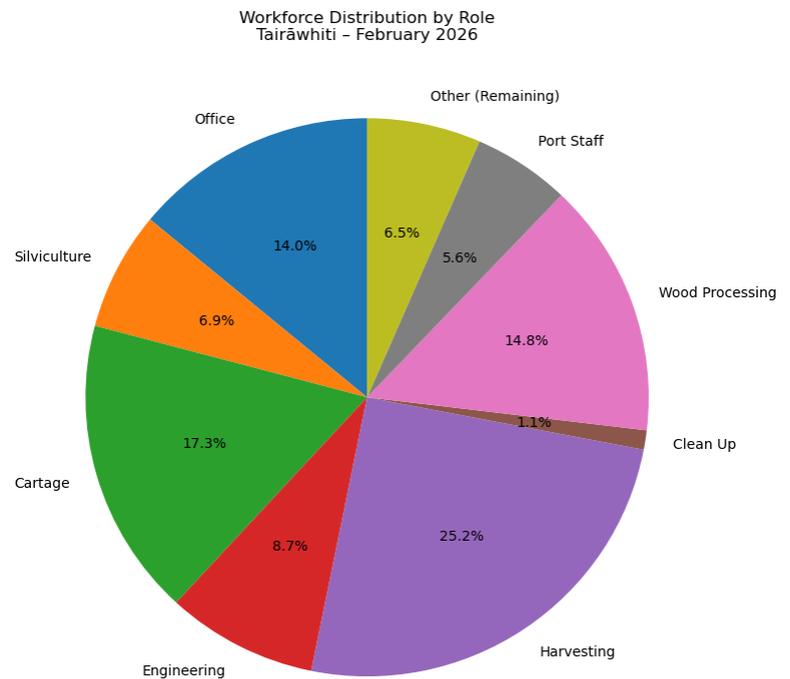
Key Findings

Total identified workforce: 1,155 workers

Largest employment area: Harvesting (293 – 25.4%)

Wood Processing represents a significant portion of the sector at 172 workers (14.9%)

Cartage accounts for 201 workers (17.4%)

Office and Engineering roles combined represent 22.8% of the workforce

Port-related employment accounts for 65 workers (5.6%)

Observations

I made the decision to separate Wood Processing and Port Staff from the former "Other" category. This revised structure more accurately reflects the full forestry value chain within Tairāwhiti — from silviculture and harvesting through to processing and export.

Conclusion

This survey identifies 1,155 workers across the forestry and wood processing sector in Tairāwhiti as at February 2026.

This figure substantially exceeds previously referenced regional statistics and demonstrates the importance of direct industry engagement when measuring workforce composition.