The Manufacturing Sector Health Check

THRIVING OR SURVIVING?

Data source: ONS September 2026



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Mean pay

July 2026

(ONS data)

Manufacturing mean pay

Up £25 to £3,786*

UK-wide mean pay

Up £9 to £3,529*

See more of the data that helps us put the manufacturing sector in a wider context.

*prior month's data adjusted

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GDP July 2026

Manufacturing GDP **Up 0.9 points to 101.5**

UK GDP **Up 0.4 points to 103.8**

Largest growth in manufacturing sub-sectors

Repair and maintenance of ships and boats	**13.6%**
Manufacture of dairy products	**4.5%**
Manufacture of fabricated metal products	**4.0%**

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Employment & vacancies August 2026

The figure for paid employees in manufacturing dropped slightly by 0.37% to 2.28 million.

UK employee numbers dropped slightly to 30.23 million.

Manufacturing vacancies reversed July's decline of 1,000, to stand at 48,000 in August. There was a small decrease of 4,000 (0.57%) in the overall UK figure.

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Wages and payroll

July 2026

Manufacturing mean pay
UP £25 (0.66%) to £3,786*

UK overall mean pay
UP £9 (0.26%) to £3,529*

Manufacturing aggregate pay
UP 0.65% to £8.67bn* per month

UK aggregate pay
UP 0.2% to £106.87bn per month

*prior month's data adjusted

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Exports and production

July 2026

Exports increased by 0.3%

Largest export growth in manufacturing sub-sectors

Building of ships and boats	**67.0%**
Manufacture of textiles	**19.0%**
Manufacture of furniture	**17.0%**

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UK production values

July 2026

Largest % monthly production value growth

Repair and maintenance of ships	**24.0%**
Manufacture of wearing apparel	**14.1%**
Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment	**13.2%**

Largest % falls in production

Repair and maintenance of aircraft and spacecraft	**-37.8%**
Building of ships and boats	**-34.0%**
Manufacture of other transport equipment	**-19.4%**

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Our take

Recent manufacturing performance still indicates a sector that's surviving rather than thriving.

Output and exports improved, vacancies recovered, and pay and payroll growth strengthened. But employment softened again, and production remained highly uneven across subsectors.

Pay momentum improved in the latest data, but these positive signals aren't doing enough on their own to offset softer employment and marked volatility across subsectors.

What's your view on the latest data?

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