

How many trees are felled to make toilet paper? Workings by Ethical Consumer.

There are a lot of differing figures out there when it comes to how many trees are felled globally as a result of producing toilet paper.

In March 2026 we published our product guide to ethical toilet paper, which used our own figures and made the following statements:

According to our calculations, around 345m trees are felled globally every year to produce toilet paper and other “sanitary and household” paper products. (Other products include facial tissue, kitchen towels, napkins, etc, but we expect that toilet paper accounts for a large proportion). This amounts to just under 1 million trees felled every day.

This document explains how we reached these figures.

How many trees are felled globally every year?

According to a [paper in Nature](#), at the global level, “over 15 billion trees are cut down each year.”

According to [this paper](#), at the global level, “35% of harvested trees [are] used for paper manufacture.”

(Other sources put the figure a bit higher. e.g. the [Business Waste](#) website states: “42% of global wood harvest is used to create paper (FAO).” However, we couldn’t find the original source of this figure.)

35% of 15 billion is 5,250,000,000

Therefore, the number of trees felled globally each year for the paper industry is:
5,250,000,000.

How much of this is for toilet paper?

We couldn't find accurate figures for toilet paper specifically, but the [FAO](#) publishes figures around tree felling and the paper industry based on the category of "Household and sanitary" paper products.

4.31 HOUSEHOLD AND SANITARY PAPER (FAO definition)

Absorbent paper, creped or uncreped, sometimes embossed, made from bleached or unbleached pulps, recovered paper or combination of these. This type of paper should be sufficiently strong to avoid disintegration or tearing in use. Other important characteristics are high absorptive capacity, retention of absorbed fluids, softness, freedom from lint and unpleasant odours. It is made in white and a variety of colours and in single, double or more plies.

+ INCLUDE: *Types of creped and uncreped papers such as disposable tissues, facial tissue, napkin, sanitary wadding, toilet tissue towelling, wiper stock.*

In 2024, [according to the FAO](#), 9% of all all paper and paperboard production was for "household and sanitary" paper products.¹

If all "household and sanitary" paper products were made from virgin tree pulp, this would equate to 472,500,000 trees felled every year to make household and sanitary paper products. (9% of 5,250,000,000 = 472,500,000.)

However, we know that not all the fibre used to create household and sanitary products is from virgin tree fibre – some of it is from recycled fibre.

At the global level, we could not find reliable figures for what proportion of household and sanitary paper products are made from virgin tree fibre and what proportion are made from recycled fibres, so we used figures from the [Confederation of European Paper Industries](#), which publishes data on rates of recycled fibre use in Europe.

In 2024, [according to CEPI](#), 27.2% of recycled pulp in Europe was used to make tissue products (previously it used the term "Sanitary and Household"), defined as: "Toilet paper, Tissues, Kitchen towels, Hand towels, Napkins and serviettes, Industrial wipers, Clothing products, Medical products, Nappies, Feminine hygiene products."²

Therefore 73% (we rounded 72.8% to 73%) of tissue products were made from virgin tree pulp.

¹ FAO. 2025. Global forest products facts and figures 2024 – Industrial roundwood, sawnwood, wood-based panels fibre furnish, paper and paperboard wood fuel, charcoal and pellets export, and import value. Rome.

² We are treating this definition as essentially the same as the FAO's definition of "Household and sanitary products."

In the absence of a similar figure for the global level, we feel it is reasonable to apply the European figure to the global level. So, for our calculations, we will assume that 73% of the total fibre used to make household and sanitary paper products is from virgin tree pulp.

(We expect this might be an under-estimate because European rates of paper recycling are relatively high.³ For comparison, if we look at figures from [Kimberly-Clark Corp](#), one of the leading US producers of tissue paper products, 18.7% of the fibre it purchased in 2024 was recycled and 81.3% was from virgin tree pulp.)

Conclusion

So, we previously calculated that if all of the fibre used to make household and sanitary paper products was virgin tree fibre then that would equate to 472,500,000 trees felled every year. But the proportion of virgin fibre used to make household and sanitary paper products is probably around 73%. So we should calculate 73% of 472,500,000.

73% of 472,500,000 = 344,925,000

This means that, globally, around 344,925,000 trees are felled each year to make household and sanitary paper products, including toilet paper (which we assume represents a significant proportion of the total).

This equates to 945,000 trees felled every day to make household and sanitary paper products, including toilet paper

³ See figure 18B: FAO. 2025. Global forest products facts and figures 2024 – Industrial roundwood, sawnwood, wood-based panels fibre furnish, paper and paperboard wood fuel, charcoal and pellets export, and import value. Rome.