

**The male occupational structure of Bedfordshire, c.1700–1871:  
*A preliminary report***

*Part of an ESRC-funded project:  
Male occupational change and economic growth in England 1750–1850*

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**Note: this is a preliminary report rather than a completed paper. Comments would be very welcome (to Peter Kitson: [pmk24@hermes.cam.ac.uk](mailto:pmk24@hermes.cam.ac.uk)) but please do not cite or use this material without permission.**

**Table 1: *Assessing the extent of recording the occupations of fathers at baptism in the parish registers of Bedfordshire, 1538–1812***

<b>Measure</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Number of pre-1813 registers	126	–
Parishes recording occupations for at least one year	102	80.95
Parishes with no occupational recording	24	19.05
Total years in observation	28,436	–
Total years with occupations	2,403	8.49
Total years without occupations	26,033	91.51

*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Table 2: *Descriptive statistics for runs of years recording the occupation of the father at baptism in the parish registers of Bedfordshire, 1538–1812***

<b>Statistic</b>	<b>Value</b>
Mean run length	7.68
Median run length	4
Standard deviation of run lengths	11.54

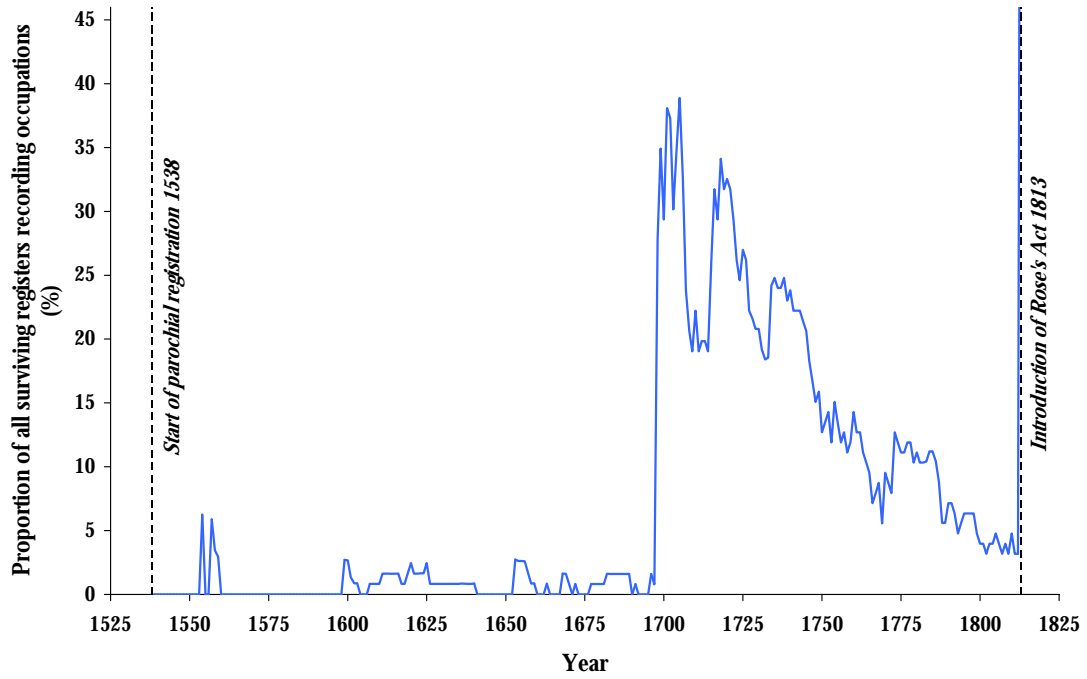
*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Table 3: *Frequencies of lengths of runs of years recording the occupation of the father at baptism in the parish registers of Bedfordshire, 1538–1812***

<b>Length of run of occupational recording (years)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1	86
2	50
3	20
4	21
5–9	71
10–14	25
15–19	12
20–24	4
25–49	23
50+	4

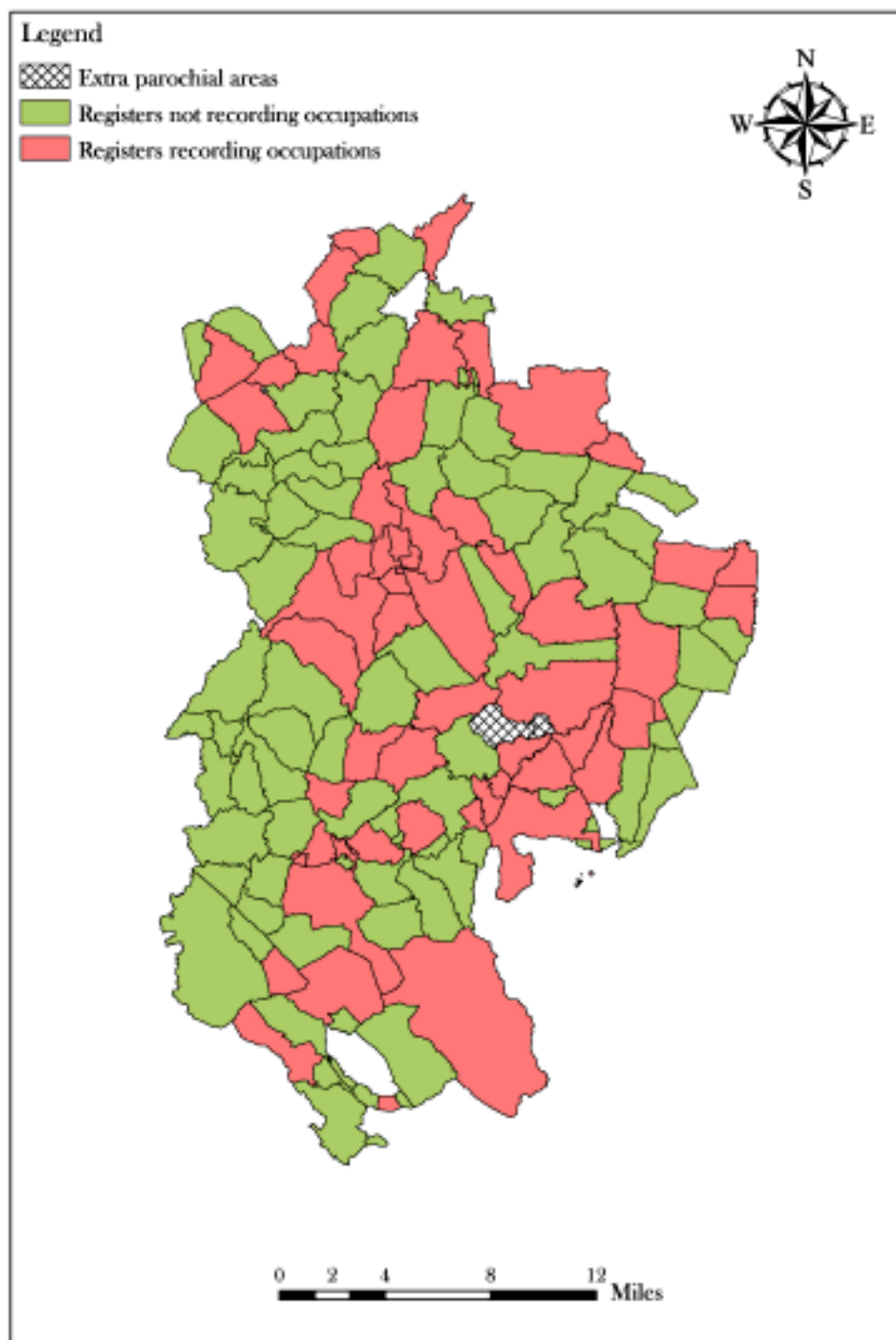
*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Figure 1: *Changing proportions of Bedfordshire parish registers recording the occupation of the father at baptism, 1538–1812***



*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Figure 2: *The geographical distribution of parishes contributing occupational data 1698–1749***



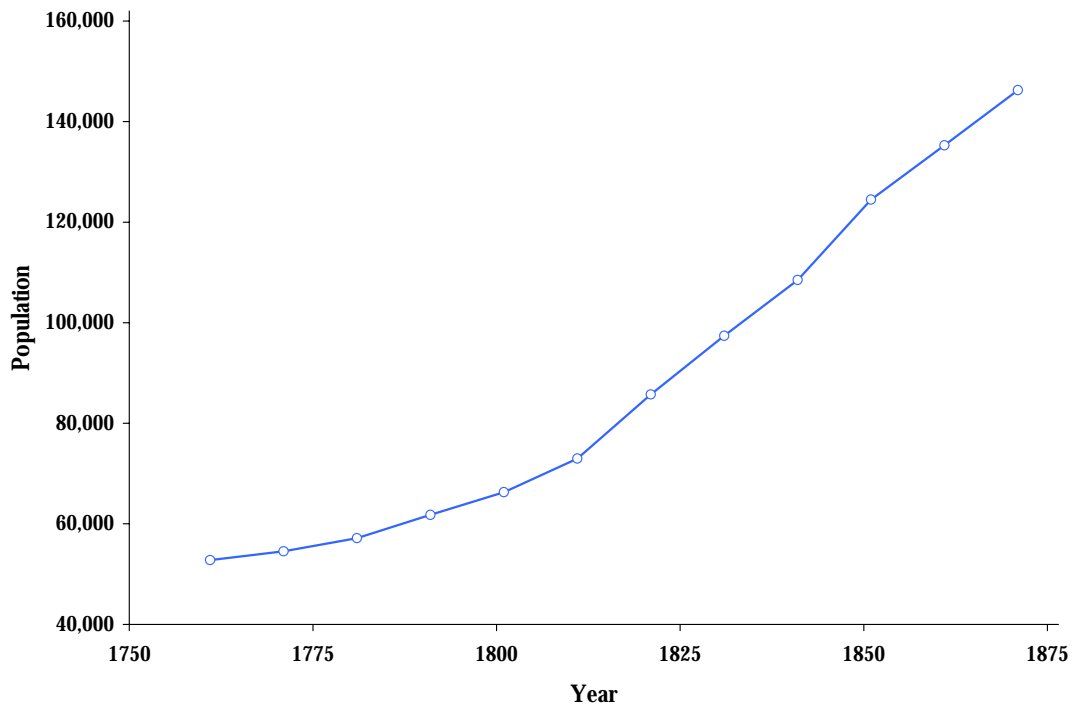
*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Figure 3: *The hundreds, boroughs and market towns of Bedfordshire c.1800***



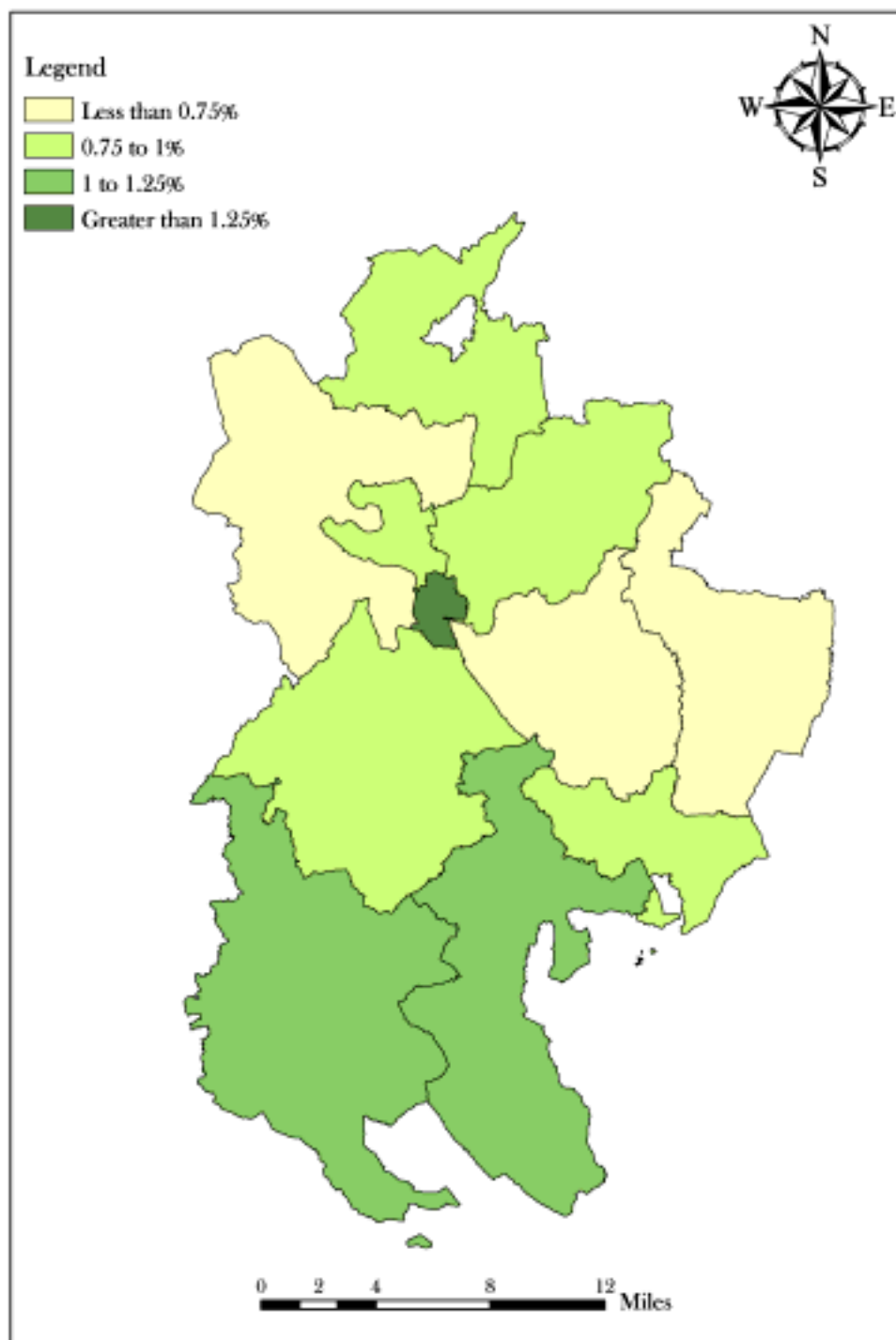
*Source: Index villaris.*

**Figure 4: *The population of Bedfordshire 1761–1871***



*Source:* 1851 Census enumeration abstract; 1871 Census enumeration abstract.

**Figure 5: *Estimated annual rates of population growth by hundred in Bedfordshire, 1761–1851***



*Source:* E. A. Wrigley.

**Table 4: *Population change by hundred in Bedfordshire, 1761–1851***

<b>Hundred or Borough</b>	<b>Population 1761</b>	<b>Population 1851</b>	<b>Percentage change</b>
Barford Hundred	3,465	6,776	95.6
Bedford Borough	2,996	11,693	290.2
Biggleswade Hundred	6,053	11,855	95.8
Clifton Hundred	3,049	8,586	181.6
Flitt Hundred	5,574	19,889	256.8
Manshead Hundred	10,509	27,593	162.6
Redbornestoke Hundred	7,529	15,060	100.0
Stodden Hundred	3,148	6,269	99.1
Willey Hundred	6,010	9,574	59.3
Wixamtree Hundred	4,449	7,183	61.4
<i>Bedfordshire</i>	<i>52,782</i>	<i>124,478</i>	<i>135.8</i>

*Source:* E. A. Wrigley.

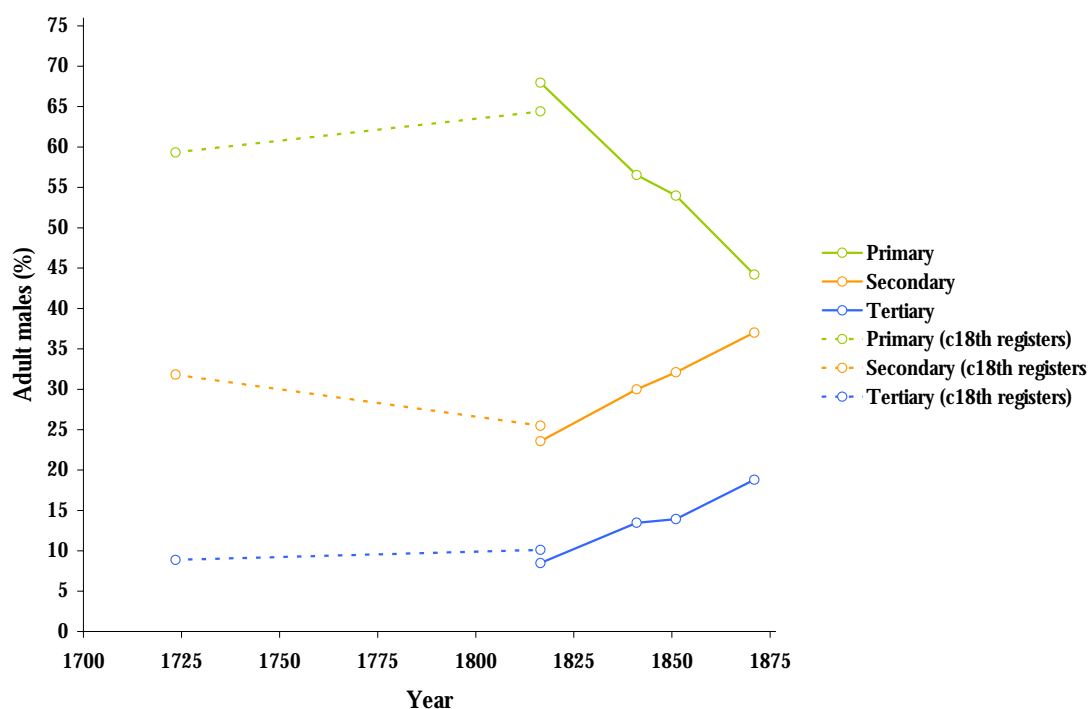


**Table 5: Adult male employment in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in Bedfordshire, c.1725–1871**

Sector of economic activity	Eighteenth-century sample			Whole County		
	<i>c.1725 PRs</i>	<i>1813–20 PRs</i>	<i>1813–20 PRs</i>	<i>1841 Census</i>	<i>1851 Census</i>	<i>1871 Census</i>
Primary	59.3	64.4	68.0	56.5	54.0	44.2
Secondary	31.8	25.5	23.6	30.0	32.1	37.0
Tertiary	8.9	10.1	8.5	13.5	13.9	18.8

*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Figure 6: Adult male employment in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in Bedfordshire, c.1725–1871**



*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Table 6: Adult male employment in the primary sector in Bedfordshire, c.1725–1871**

Sector of economic activity	Eighteenth-century sample		Whole County			
	<i>c.1725</i> PRs	<i>1813–20</i> PRs	<i>1813–20</i> PRs	<i>1841</i> Census	<i>1851</i> Census	<i>1871</i> Census
agriculture	57.34	62.66	65.97	52.98	49.76	39.79
estate work	1.87	1.46	1.56	2.71	3.14	3.59
forestry	0.06	0.25	0.38	0.83	1.03	0.71
fishing	0.06	0.01	0.03	0.00	0.01	0.01
mining	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.04	0.09

*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Table 7: Adult male employment in the secondary sector in Bedfordshire, c.1725–1871**

Sector of economic activity	Eighteenth-century sample		Whole County			
	<i>c.1725</i> PRs	<i>1813–20</i> PRs	<i>1813–20</i> PRs	<i>1841</i> Census	<i>1851</i> Census	<i>1871</i> Census
food and drink	4.60	3.17	3.17	3.90	4.36	4.22
clothing	4.40	2.17	1.84	2.60	3.55	1.81
footwear	3.24	3.53	3.16	3.84	3.25	2.89
leather, bone, hair	1.35	0.60	0.50	0.57	0.45	0.48
textiles	1.50	0.31	0.17	0.16	0.29	0.10
building and construction	5.59	6.40	6.46	6.49	6.87	7.80
woodworking	0.57	0.59	0.36	0.58	2.77	0.61
instrument making	0.12	0.11	0.06	0.19	0.20	0.23
printing, publishing	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.13	0.20	0.22
vehicle making	1.27	1.01	0.85	1.04	0.96	0.89
earthenware, glass, brick making	0.08	0.15	0.20	0.57	0.77	0.81
iron and steel manufacture	2.24	1.89	1.81	1.74	1.59	2.39
non-ferrous metals	0.14	0.34	0.27	0.37	0.39	0.35
engineering, machinery, tools	0.19	0.29	0.16	0.21	0.27	0.48
rope making	0.14	0.07	0.04	0.06	0.04	0.06
cane, rush, straw industries	0.12	0.18	0.15	0.51	0.15	4.44
minor manufactures and trades	0.54	0.02	0.01	0.09	0.05	0.05

*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Table 8: Adult male employment in the tertiary sector in Bedfordshire, c.1725–1871**

Sector of economic activity	Eighteenth-century sample		Whole County			
	<i>c.1725</i> <i>PRs</i>	<i>1813–20</i> <i>PRs</i>	<i>1813–20</i> <i>PRs</i>	<i>1841</i> <i>Census</i>	<i>1851</i> <i>Census</i>	<i>1871</i> <i>Census</i>
transport	0.55	1.49	1.28	1.32	3.12	5.43
service occupations	0.49	0.20	0.17	0.30	0.36	0.42
banking and financial services	0.04	0.11	0.06	0.16	0.14	0.32
dealing	1.03	1.25	1.17	2.26	1.58	2.77
retailing	1.08	0.94	0.76	2.04	2.65	3.62
victualling	2.58	1.71	1.73	1.74	1.70	1.98
central and local government	0.39	0.52	0.38	0.56	0.75	0.84
professions	1.45	1.16	0.95	1.87	1.97	2.16
clerical and secretarial activities	0.54	0.44	0.32	0.43	0.20	0.15
armed forces	0.46	1.19	0.73	0.10	0.17	0.31

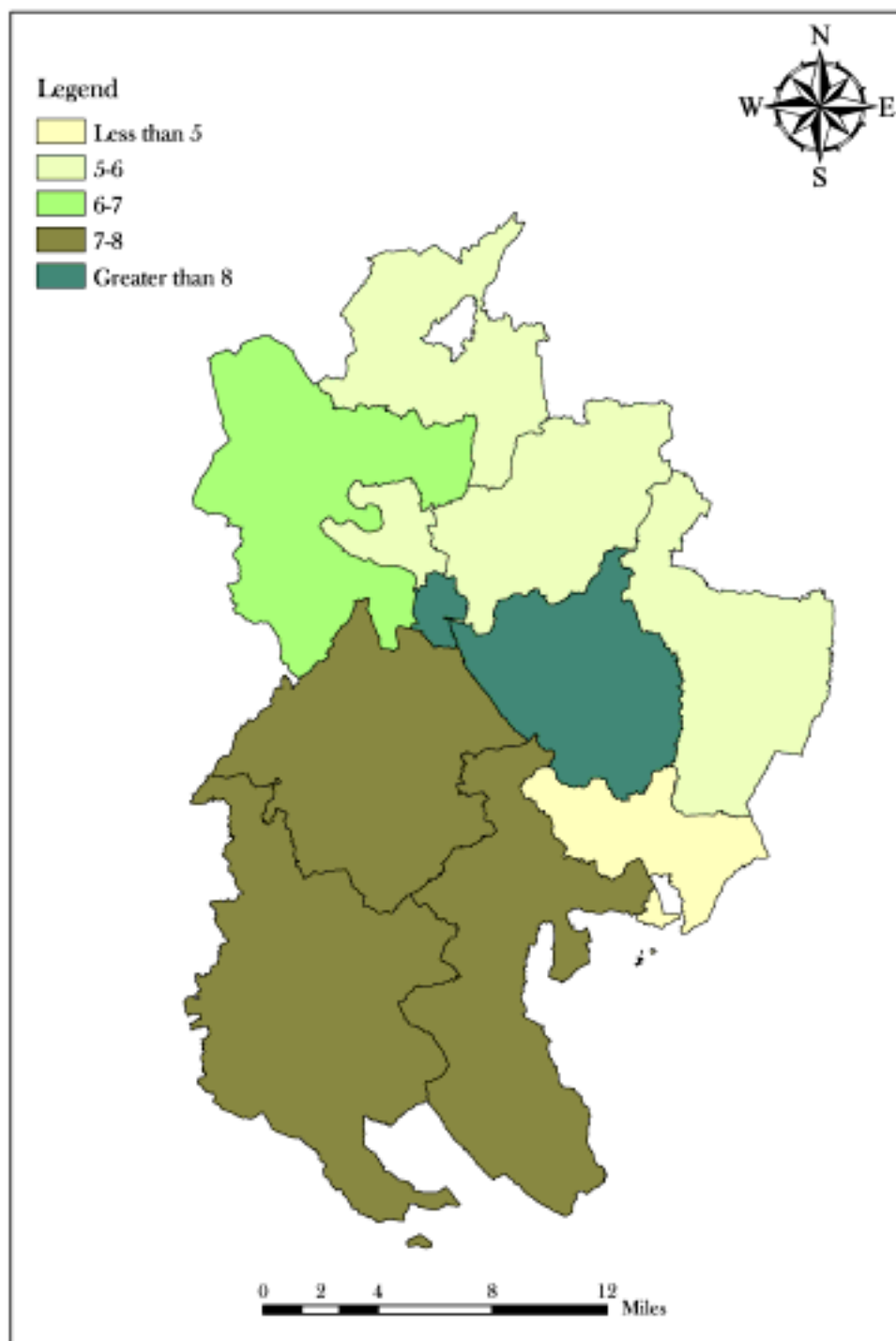
*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Table 9: Aspects of male adult male employment in the agricultural sector in Bedfordshire, c.1725–1871**

Sector of economic activity	Eighteenth-century sample		Whole County			
	<i>c.1725</i> <i>PRs</i>	<i>1813–20</i> <i>PRs</i>	<i>1813–20</i> <i>PRs</i>	<i>1841</i> <i>Census</i>	<i>1851</i> <i>Census</i>	<i>1871</i> <i>Census</i>
farmer	12.54	8.70	9.50	10.77	9.33	10.14
yeoman	3.00	0.18	0.18	0.00	0.00	0.00
husbandman	8.33	0.11	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00
agricultural labourer	69.17	89.80	88.92	88.80	84.14	82.12
cattle husbandry	4.19	0.20	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.00
sheep husbandry	2.36	0.51	0.77	0.00	1.36	2.80
market gardener	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.04	0.07	0.14

*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Figure 7: Ratios of agricultural labourers per farmer by hundred in Bedfordshire in 1831**



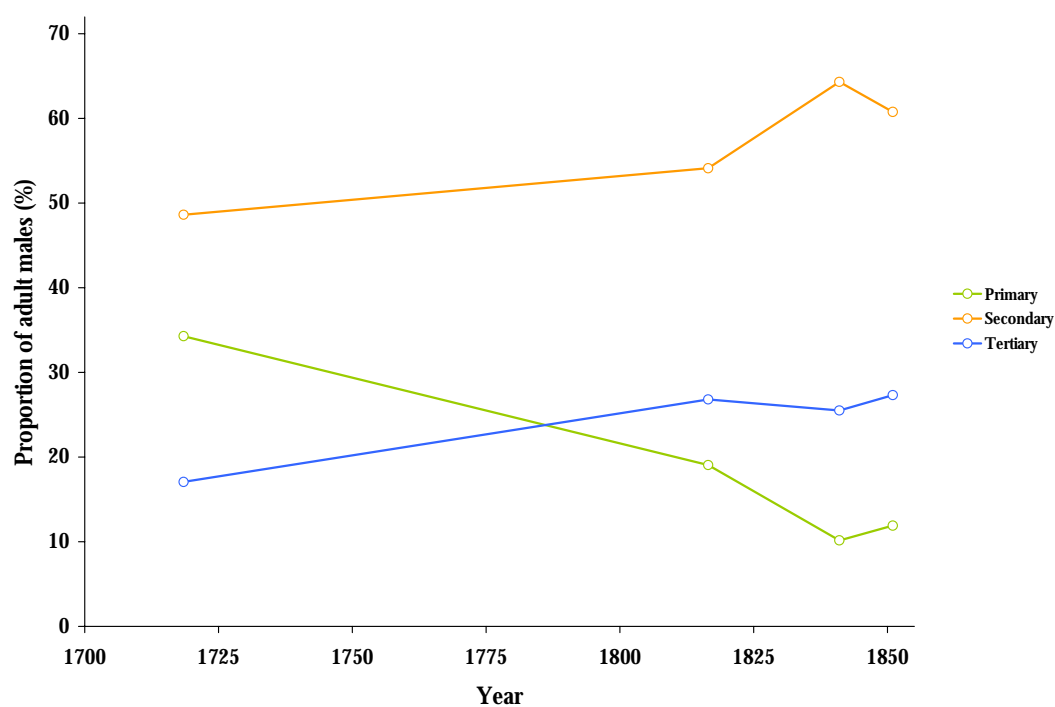
*Source:* 1831 Census.

**Table 10: Adult male employment in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in Bedford, c.1725–1871**

Sector of economic activity	Period			
	1715–22 PRs	1813–20 PRs	1841 Census	1851 Census
Primary	34.3	19.1	10.2	11.9
Secondary	48.6	54.1	64.3	60.8
Tertiary	17.1	26.8	25.5	27.3

*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Figure 8: Adult male employment in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in Bedford, c.1720–1871**



*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Table 11: Adult male employment in the secondary sector in Bedford, c.1720–1871**

Sector	Period			
	1715–22 <i>PRs</i>	1813–20 <i>PRs</i>	1841 <i>Census</i>	1851 <i>Census</i>
food and drink	9.56	3.46	6.46	6.68
clothing	6.31	5.19	5.45	6.18
footwear	3.92	9.64	11.28	8.66
leather, bone, hair	2.56	2.47	1.80	1.45
textiles	1.71	0.37	0.74	0.69
building and construction	6.66	13.23	12.39	10.61
woodworking	1.02	2.22	1.91	1.79
printing, publishing	0.00	0.25	0.69	1.34
vehicle making	1.37	1.11	1.54	1.37
earthenware, glass, brick making	0.00	0.87	1.59	0.99
iron and steel manufacture	1.71	1.85	3.18	3.20
non-ferrous metals	0.17	1.11	1.43	1.45
cane, rush, straw industries	0.34	0.49	0.48	0.50
minor manufactures and trades	3.58	0.25	0.69	0.50

*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Table 12: Adult male employment in the tertiary sector in Bedford, c.1720–1871**

Sector	Period			
	1715–22 <i>PRs</i>	1813–20 <i>PRs</i>	1841 <i>Census</i>	1851 <i>Census</i>
transport	0.17	5.19	3.55	4.01
service occupations	1.19	0.12	0.90	0.99
banking and financial services	0.00	0.25	0.85	0.53
dealing	2.22	1.85	3.86	3.51
retailing	2.22	1.48	4.66	5.19
victualling	3.92	4.20	1.91	2.52
central and local government	1.19	1.85	1.27	2.14
professions	2.39	2.60	4.13	4.92
clerical and secretarial activities	1.02	0.87	1.27	0.65
armed forces	2.73	4.82	0.37	1.03

*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Table 13: Adult male employment in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in Luton, Shefford and Biggleswade, c.1700–c.1817**

Sector	Luton		Shefford		Biggleswade	
	1699–1706	1813–20	1698–1707	1813–20	1740–47	1813–20
Primary	57.1	59.9			53.2	45.3
Secondary	30.8	29.2			29.0	37.3
Tertiary	12.1	11.0			17.8	17.4

*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Table 14: Adult male employment in the secondary sector in Luton, Shefford and Biggleswade, c.1700–c.1817**

Sector	Luton		Shefford		Biggleswade	
	1699–1706	1813–20	1698–1707	1813–20	1740–47	1813–20
food and drink	4.74	4.97			4.78	4.89
clothing	3.88	1.39			1.91	3.15
footware	4.31	3.70			3.18	3.94
leather, bone, hair	2.16	1.04			1.27	1.42
textiles	1.72	1.04			0.32	0.47
building and construction	2.16	6.94			7.64	7.10
woodworking	0.86	0.46			0.64	1.89
instrument making	0.00	0.00			0.64	1.10
vehicle making	2.59	1.85			1.59	1.26
iron and steel manufacture	2.16	0.69			1.27	3.94
non-ferrous metals	0.00	0.58			0.00	0.63
cane, rush, straw industries	0.00	1.16			0.00	0.00

*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Table 15: *Adult male employment in the tertiary sector in Luton, Shefford and Biggleswade, c.1700–c.1817***

Sector	Luton		Shefford		Biggleswade	
	1699– 1706	1813– 20	1698– 1707	1813– 20	1740– 47	1813– 20
transport	1.72	0.92			4.46	3.47
service occupations	0.86	0.12			0.32	0.16
banking and financial services	0.00	0.46			0.00	0.32
dealing	0.43	2.66			0.00	3.00
retailing	1.72	0.46			0.64	0.63
victualling	6.47	1.39			7.01	4.10
central and local government	0.43	0.23			0.64	1.10
professions	0.43	1.62			2.55	2.52
clerical and secretarial activities	0.00	0.00			0.00	0.95
armed forces	0.00	1.39			1.59	0.32

*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.



**Table 16: Adult male employment in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in five Bedfordshire market towns, 1813–20**

Sector	Ampthill	Dunstable	Leighton Buzzard	Potton	Woburn
Primary	51.0	37.5	47.3	43.7	38.0
Secondary	36.6	40.7	40.3	46.1	41.3
Tertiary	12.4	21.8	12.4	10.1	20.7

*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Table 17: Adult male employment in the secondary sector in five Bedfordshire market towns, 1813–20**

Sector	Ampthill	Dunstable	Leighton Buzzard	Potton	Woburn
food and drink	5.09	3.85	11.01	4.71	2.54
clothing	3.27	5.38	3.51	2.17	1.09
footwear	6.91	7.44	5.39	9.06	5.80
leather, bone, hair	0.00	3.33	1.64	1.81	1.81
textiles	0.00	0.26	0.00	3.62	0.00
building and construction	6.91	9.23	5.62	7.97	17.75
woodworking	1.45	0.51	1.87	4.35	0.00
vehicle making	0.00	1.28	0.00	2.54	0.00
iron and steel manufacture	3.64	2.05	1.87	1.45	2.17
non-ferrous metals	1.82	0.00	1.17	0.00	1.45
cane, rush, straw industries	0.00	0.00	0.23	0.00	0.36

*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.

**Table 18: *Adult male employment in the tertiary sector in five Bedfordshire market towns, 1813–20***

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Ampthill</b>	<b>Dunstable</b>	<b>Leighton Buzzard</b>	<b>Potton</b>	<b>Woburn</b>
transport	0.36	7.18	0.00	0.36	9.06
service occupations	1.82	0.51	0.23	1.45	0.72
banking and financial services	0.36	0.00	0.23	0.36	0.00
dealing	2.55	3.85	3.51	2.90	2.17
retailing	2.55	2.82	0.70	1.45	2.17
victualling	0.36	3.33	5.85	0.00	2.54
central and local government	1.09	1.03	0.47	1.09	1.45
professions	1.82	2.31	1.41	1.81	1.09
armed forces	0.36	0.51	0.00	0.00	0.72

*Source:* Bedfordshire parish registers.