

All industry is part of a chain that starts with primary industry: the production or extraction of raw materials, like agricultural products or mining; and secondary industry: the processing of these raw materials into usable products.

Next in the chain come tertiary and quaternary industries, also known as the service industries. Tertiary and quaternary industries tend to be more important in more economically developed countries.

The tertiary sector includes the selling of the goods that have been produced in the primary and secondary sectors. This might be in shops or online. Tertiary industries also include the selling of services and skills, for example financial services, legal services, health services, hospitality services and also the transportation of goods and people.

The most recent types of industries are the quaternary industries which support and develop the service industries and often involve information, technological and digital services. This sector really grew in strength during the latter half of the twentieth century. Examples of quaternary industry include computing, consultancy, project management, education and research and development.

Digital products, like the new game everyone's downloading or the latest phone, are all developed in the quaternary sector. In the past, primary and secondary industries were the biggest employers in the United Kingdom.

But towards the end of the twentieth century, the manufacturing sector here greatly declined and the digital revolution saw new industries and ways of working come to prominence.

Today, most jobs in the United Kingdom are found in the tertiary and quaternary sectors which employ over three quarters of the workforce. They tend to focus around big towns and cities. It's thought that future economic growth in the United Kingdom will focus around this sector.