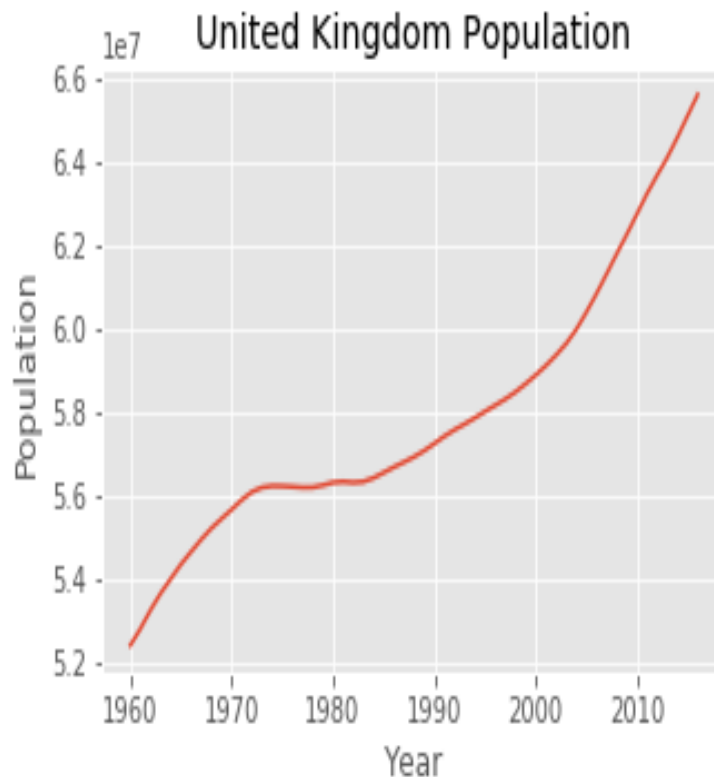


# United Kingdom



The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, commonly known as the United Kingdom (UK) or Britain, is a sovereign country in western Europe. Lying off the north-western coast of the European mainland, the UK includes the island of Great Britain, the north-eastern part of the island of Ireland and many smaller islands. Northern Ireland is the only part of the United Kingdom that shares a land border with another sovereign state—the Republic of Ireland. Apart from this land border, the UK is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, with the North Sea to its east, the English Channel to its south and the Celtic Sea to its south-south-west, giving it the 12th-longest coastline in the world. The Irish Sea lies between Great Britain and Ireland. With an area of 242,500 square kilometres (93,600 sq mi), the UK is the 78th-largest sovereign state in the world. It is also the 21st-most populous country, with an estimated 65.5 million inhabitants in 2016. The UK is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy. The monarch is Queen Elizabeth II, who has reigned since 1952, making her the longest-serving current head of state. The UK's capital and largest city is London, a global city and financial centre with an urban area population of 10.3 million. Other major urban areas in the UK include the conurbations centred on Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Glasgow and Liverpool. The UK consists of four countries—England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. All but England have devolved administrations, each with varying powers, based in their capitals Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, respectively. The nearby Isle of Man, Bailiwick of Guernsey and Bailiwick of Jersey are not part of the UK, being Crown dependencies with the British Government responsible for defence and international representation. Prior to the creation of the UK, Wales had been conquered and annexed by the Kingdom of England. This meant that the United Kingdom created in 1707 by the Treaty of Union between England and Scotland encompassed all of Great Britain. The Kingdom of Ireland merged with this state in 1801 to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Five-sixths of Ireland seceded from the UK in 1922, leaving the present formulation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. There are fourteen British Overseas Territories, the remnants of the British Empire which, at its height in the 1920s, encompassed almost a quarter of the world's land mass and

was the largest empire in history. British influence can be observed in the language, culture and legal systems of many of its former colonies. The UK is a developed country and has the world's fifth-largest economy by nominal GDP and ninth-largest economy by purchasing power parity. It has a high-income economy and has a "very high" Human Development Index, ranking 16th in the world. It was the first industrialised country and the world's foremost power during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The UK remains a great power with considerable economic, cultural, military, scientific and political influence internationally. It is a recognised nuclear weapons state and is sixth in military expenditure in the world. It has been a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council since its first session in 1946. It has been a leading member state of the European Union (EU) and its predecessor, the European Economic Community (EEC), since 1973; however, a referendum in 2016 resulted in 51.9% of UK voters favouring leaving the EU, and the country's exit is being negotiated. The UK is also a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, the Council of Europe, the G7, the G20, NATO, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Interpol and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

== Etymology and terminology ==

The 1707 Acts of Union declared that the kingdoms of England and Scotland were "United into One Kingdom by the Name of Great Britain", though the new state is also referred to in the Acts as the "Kingdom of Great Britain", "United Kingdom of Great Britain" and "United Kingdom". The term "United Kingdom" is found in informal use during the 18th century and the country was also occasionally referred to as the "United Kingdom of Great Britain" though its full official name, from 1707 to 1800, was merely "Great Britain", without a "long form". The Acts of Union 1800 united the Kingdom of Great Britain and the Kingdom of Ireland in 1801, forming the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Following the partition of Ireland and the independence of the Irish Free State in 1922, which left Northern Ireland as the only part of the island of Ireland within the United Kingdom, the name "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland" was adopted. Although the United Kingdom, as a sovereign state, is a country, England, Scotland, Wales and, to a lesser degree, Northern Ireland are also regarded as countries, though they are not sovereign states. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have devolved self-government. The British Prime Minister's website has used the phrase "countries within a country" to describe the United Kingdom. Some statistical summaries, such as those for the twelve NUTS 1 regions of the United Kingdom, also refer to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as "regions". Northern Ireland is also referred to as a "province". With regard to Northern Ireland, the descriptive name used "can be controversial, with the choice often revealing one's political preferences". The term "Britain" is often used as a synonym for the United Kingdom. The term "Great Britain", by contrast, refers conventionally to the island of Great Britain, or politically to England, Scotland and Wales in combination. However, it is sometimes used as a loose synonym for the United Kingdom as a whole. GB and GBR are the standard country codes for the United Kingdom (see ISO 3166-2 and ISO 3166-1 alpha-3) and are consequently used by international organisations to refer to the United Kingdom. Additionally, the United Kingdom's Olympic team competes under the name "Great Britain" or "Team GB". The adjective "British" is commonly used to refer to matters relating to the United Kingdom. The term has no definite legal connotation, but is used in law to refer to United Kingdom citizenship and matters to do with nationality. People of the United Kingdom use a number of different terms to describe their national identity and may identify themselves as being British; or as being English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish, or Irish; or as being both. In Welsh, the long form name of the state is "Teyrnas Unedig Prydain Fawr a Gogledd Iwerddon", with "Teyrnas Unedig" being used as a short form name on government websites. However, it is usually abbreviated to "DU" for the mutated form "Y Deyrnas Unedig". In Scottish Gaelic, the long form is "Rìoghachd Aonaichte Bhreatainn is Èireann a Tuath" and the short form "Rìoghachd Aonaichte".

== History ==

=== Background ===

Settlement by anatomically modern humans of what was to become the United Kingdom occurred in waves beginning by about 30,000 years ago. By the end of the region's prehistoric period, the population is thought to have belonged, in the main, to a culture termed Insular Celtic, comprising Brythonic Britain and Gaelic Ireland. The Roman conquest, beginning in 43 AD, and the 400-year rule of southern Britain, was followed by an invasion by Germanic Anglo-Saxon settlers, reducing the Brythonic area mainly to what was to become Wales, Cornwall and the historic Kingdom of Strathclyde. Most of the region settled by the Anglo-Saxons became unified as the Kingdom of England in the 10th century. Meanwhile, Gaelic-speakers in north-west Britain (with connections to the north-east of Ireland and traditionally supposed to have migrated from there in the 5th century) united with the Picts to create the Kingdom of Scotland in the 9th century. In 1066, the Normans and their Breton allies invaded England from northern France and after its conquest, seized large parts of Wales, conquered much of Ireland and were invited to settle in Scotland, bringing to each country feudalism on

the Northern French model and Norman-French culture. The Norman elites greatly influenced, but eventually assimilated with, each of the local cultures. Subsequent medieval English kings completed the conquest of Wales and made an unsuccessful attempt to annex Scotland. Following the Declaration of Arbroath, Scotland maintained its independence, albeit in near-constant conflict with England. The English monarchs, through inheritance of substantial territories in France and claims to the French crown, were also heavily involved in conflicts in France, most notably the Hundred Years War, while the Kings of Scots were in an alliance with the French during this period. The early modern period saw religious conflict resulting from the Reformation and the introduction of Protestant state churches in each country. Wales was fully incorporated into the Kingdom of England, and Ireland was constituted as a kingdom in personal union with the English crown. In what was to become Northern Ireland, the lands of the independent Catholic Gaelic nobility were confiscated and given to Protestant settlers from England and Scotland. In 1603, the kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland were united in a personal union when James VI, King of Scots, inherited the crowns of England and Ireland and moved his court from Edinburgh to London; each country nevertheless remained a separate political entity and retained its separate political, legal, and religious institutions. In the mid-17th century, all three kingdoms were involved in a series of connected wars (including the English Civil War) which led to the temporary overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of the short-lived unitary republic of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland. During the 17th and 18th centuries, British sailors were involved in acts of piracy (privateering), attacking and stealing from ships off the coast of Europe and the Caribbean. Although the monarchy was restored, the Interregnum ensured (along with the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the subsequent Bill of Rights 1689, and the Claim of Right Act 1689) that, unlike much of the rest of Europe, royal absolutism would not prevail, and a professed Catholic could never accede to the throne. The British constitution would develop on the basis of constitutional monarchy and the parliamentary system. With the founding of the Royal Society in 1660, science was greatly encouraged. During this period, particularly in England, the development of naval power (and the interest in voyages of discovery) led to the acquisition and settlement of overseas colonies, particularly in North America. Though previous attempts at uniting the two kingdoms within Great Britain in 1606, 1667, and 1689 had proved unsuccessful, the attempt initiated in 1705 led to the Treaty of Union of 1706 being agreed and ratified by both parliaments === Treaty of Union === On 1 May 1707, the united Kingdom of Great Britain came into being, the result of Acts of Union being passed by the parliaments of England and Scotland to ratify the 1706 Treaty of Union and so unite the two kingdoms. In the 18th century, cabinet government developed under Robert Walpole, in practice the first prime minister (1721–1742). A series of Jacobite Uprisings sought to remove the Protestant House of Hanover from the British throne and restore the Catholic House of Stuart. The Jacobites were finally defeated at the Battle of Culloden in 1746, after which the Scottish Highlanders were brutally suppressed. The British colonies in North America that broke away from Britain in the American War of Independence became the United States of America, recognised by Britain in 1783. British imperial ambition turned towards Asia, particularly to India. During the 18th century, Britain was involved in the Atlantic slave trade. British ships transported an estimated two million slaves from Africa to the West Indies. Parliament banned the trade in 1807, banned slavery in the British Empire in 1833, and Britain took a leading role in the movement to abolish slavery worldwide through the blockade of Africa and pressing other nations to end their trade with a series of treaties. The world's oldest international human rights organisation, Anti-Slavery International, was formed in London in 1839. === Union with Ireland === The term "United Kingdom" became official in 1801 when the parliaments of Britain and Ireland each passed an Act of Union, uniting the two kingdoms and creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. In the early 19th century, the British-led Industrial Revolution began to transform the country. Gradually political power shifted away from the old Tory and Whig landowning classes towards the new industrialists. An alliance of merchants and industrialists with the Whigs would lead to a new party, the Liberals, with an ideology of free trade and laissez-faire. In 1832 Parliament passed the Great Reform Act, which began the transfer of political power from the aristocracy to the middle classes. In the countryside, enclosure of the land was driving small farmers out. Towns and cities began to swell with a new urban working class. Few ordinary workers had the vote, and they created their own organisations in the form of trade unions. After the defeat of France at the end of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1792–1815), Great Britain emerged as the principal naval and imperial power of the 19th century (with London the largest city in the world from about 1830). Unchallenged at sea, British dominance was later described as Pax Britannica ("British Peace"), a period of relative peace among the Great Powers (1815–1914) during which the British Empire became

the global hegemon and adopted the role of global policeman. By the time of the Great Exhibition of 1851, Britain was described as the "workshop of the world". The British Empire was expanded to include India, large parts of Africa and many other territories throughout the world. Alongside the formal control it exerted over its own colonies, British dominance of much of world trade meant that it effectively controlled the economies of many regions, such as Asia and Latin America. Domestically, political attitudes favoured free trade and laissez-faire policies and a gradual widening of the voting franchise. During the century, the population increased at a dramatic rate, accompanied by rapid urbanisation, causing significant social and economic stresses. To seek new markets and sources of raw materials, the Conservative Party under Disraeli launched a period of imperialist expansion in Egypt, South Africa, and elsewhere. Canada, Australia, and New Zealand became self-governing dominions. After the turn of the century, Britain's industrial dominance was challenged by Germany and the United States. Social reform and home rule for Ireland were important domestic issues after 1900. The Labour Party emerged from an alliance of trade unions and small socialist groups in 1900, and suffragettes campaigned for women's right to vote before 1914. Britain fought alongside France, Russia and (after 1917) the United States, against Germany and its allies in the First World War (1914–1918). British armed forces were engaged across much of the British Empire and in several regions of Europe, particularly on the Western front. The high fatalities of trench warfare caused the loss of much of a generation of men, with lasting social effects in the nation and a great disruption in the social order. After the war, Britain received the League of Nations mandate over a number of former German and Ottoman colonies. The British Empire reached its greatest extent, covering a fifth of the world's land surface and a quarter of its population. However, Britain had suffered 2.5 million casualties and finished the war with a huge national debt. === Irish independence === The rise of Irish nationalism, and disputes within Ireland over the terms of Irish Home Rule, led eventually to the partition of the island in 1921. The Irish Free State became independent, initially with Dominion status in 1922, and unambiguously independent in 1931. Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom. A wave of strikes in the mid-1920s culminated in the General Strike of 1926. Britain had still not recovered from the effects of the war when the Great Depression (1929–1932) occurred. This led to considerable unemployment and hardship in the old industrial areas, as well as political and social unrest in the 1930s, with rising membership in communist and socialist parties. A coalition government was formed in 1931. Britain entered the Second World War by declaring war on Nazi Germany in 1939, after Germany had invaded Poland. Winston Churchill became prime minister and head of a coalition government in 1940. Despite the defeat of its European allies in the first year of the war, Britain and its Empire continued the fight alone against Germany. In 1940, the Royal Air Force defeated the German Luftwaffe in a struggle for control of the skies in the Battle of Britain. Urban areas suffered heavy bombing during the Blitz. There were also eventual hard-fought victories in the Battle of the Atlantic, the North Africa campaign and the Burma campaign. British forces played an important role in the Normandy landings of 1944, achieved with its United States ally. === Since the Second World War === After the end of the Second World War in 1945, the UK was one of the Big Four powers (along with the U.S., the Soviet Union, and China) who met to plan the post-war world; it was an original signatory to the Declaration of the United Nations. The UK became one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and worked closely with the United States to establish the IMF, World Bank and NATO. However, the war left the UK severely weakened and depending financially on the Marshall Plan. In the immediate post-war years, the Labour government initiated a radical programme of reforms, which had a significant effect on British society in the following decades. Major industries and public utilities were nationalised, a welfare state was established, and a comprehensive, publicly funded healthcare system, the National Health Service, was created. The rise of nationalism in the colonies coincided with Britain's now much-diminished economic position, so that a policy of decolonisation was unavoidable. Independence was granted to India and Pakistan in 1947. Over the next three decades, most colonies of the British Empire gained their independence. Many became members of the Commonwealth of Nations. The UK was the third country to develop a nuclear weapons arsenal (with its first atomic bomb test in 1952), but the new post-war limits of Britain's international role were illustrated by the Suez Crisis of 1956. The international spread of the English language ensured the continuing international influence of its literature and culture. As a result of a shortage of workers in the 1950s, the government encouraged immigration from Commonwealth countries. In the following decades, the UK became a more multi-ethnic society than before. Despite rising living standards in the late 1950s and 1960s, the UK's economic performance was less successful than many of its main competitors such as France, West Germany and Japan. In the

decade-long process of European integration, the UK was a founding member of the alliance called the Western European Union, established with the London and Paris Conferences in 1954. In 1960 the UK was one of the seven founding members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), but in 1973 it left to join the European Communities (EC). When the EC became the European Union (EU) in 1992, the UK was one of the 12 founding members. The Treaty of Lisbon was signed in 2007, which forms the constitutional basis of the European Union since then. From the late 1960s, Northern Ireland suffered communal and paramilitary violence (sometimes affecting other parts of the UK) conventionally known as the Troubles. It is usually considered to have ended with the Belfast "Good Friday" Agreement of 1998. Following a period of widespread economic slowdown and industrial strife in the 1970s, the Conservative government of the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher initiated a radical policy of monetarism, deregulation, particularly of the financial sector (for example, Big Bang in 1986) and labour markets, the sale of state-owned companies (privatisation), and the withdrawal of subsidies to others. This resulted in high unemployment and social unrest, but ultimately also economic growth, particularly in the services sector. From 1984, the economy was helped by the inflow of substantial North Sea oil revenues. Around the end of the 20th century there were major changes to the governance of the UK with the establishment of devolved administrations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The statutory incorporation followed acceptance of the European Convention on Human Rights. The UK is still a key global player diplomatically and militarily. It plays leading roles in the EU, UN and NATO. However, controversy surrounds some of Britain's overseas military deployments, particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq. The 2008 global financial crisis severely affected the UK economy. The coalition government of 2010 introduced austerity measures intended to tackle the substantial public deficits which resulted. In 2014 the Scottish Government held a referendum on Scottish independence, with 55.3% of voters rejecting the independence proposal and opting to remain within the United Kingdom. In 2016, 51.9% of voters in the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. The legal process of leaving the EU began on 29 March 2017, with the UK's invocation of Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon, formally notifying the EU of the UK's intention to leave. The article stipulates that the negotiations to leave will last at least two years. The UK remains a full member of the EU during this time. == Geography == The total area of the United Kingdom is approximately 243,610 square kilometres (94,060 sq mi). The country occupies the major part of the British Isles archipelago and includes the island of Great Britain, the north-eastern one-sixth of the island of Ireland and some smaller surrounding islands. It lies between the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea with the south-east coast coming within 22 miles (35 km) of the coast of northern France, from which it is separated by the English Channel. In 1993 10% of the UK was forested, 46% used for pastures and 25% cultivated for agriculture. The Royal Greenwich Observatory in London is the defining point of the Prime Meridian. The United Kingdom lies between latitudes 49° to 61° N, and longitudes 9° W to 2° E. Northern Ireland shares a 224-mile (360 km) land boundary with the Republic of Ireland. The coastline of Great Britain is 11,073 miles (17,820 km) long. It is connected to continental Europe by the Channel Tunnel, which at 31 miles (50 km) (24 miles (38 km) underwater) is the longest underwater tunnel in the world. England accounts for just over half of the total area of the UK, covering 130,395 square kilometres (50,350 sq mi). Most of the country consists of lowland terrain, with mountainous terrain north-west of the Tees-Exe line; including the Cumbrian Mountains of the Lake District, the Pennines, Exmoor and Dartmoor. The main rivers and estuaries are the Thames, Severn and the Humber. England's highest mountain is Scafell Pike (978 metres (3,209 ft)) in the Lake District. Scotland accounts for just under a third of the total area of the UK, covering 78,772 square kilometres (30,410 sq mi) and including nearly eight hundred islands, predominantly west and north of the mainland; notably the Hebrides, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands. Scotland is the most mountainous country in the UK and its topography is distinguished by the Highland Boundary Fault—a geological rock fracture—which traverses Scotland from Arran in the west to Stonehaven in the east. The fault separates two distinctively different regions; namely the Highlands to the north and west and the lowlands to the south and east. The more rugged Highland region contains the majority of Scotland's mountainous land, including Ben Nevis which at 1,343 metres (4,406 ft) is the highest point in the British Isles. Lowland areas—especially the narrow waist of land between the Firth of Clyde and the Firth of Forth known as the Central Belt—are flatter and home to most of the population including Glasgow, Scotland's largest city, and Edinburgh, its capital and political centre, although upland and mountainous terrain lies within the Southern Uplands. Wales accounts for less than a tenth of the total area of the UK, covering 20,779 square kilometres (8,020 sq mi). Wales is mostly mountainous, though South Wales is less mountainous than North and mid Wales. The main population and industrial areas

are in South Wales, consisting of the coastal cities of Cardiff, Swansea and Newport, and the South Wales Valleys to their north. The highest mountains in Wales are in Snowdonia and include Snowdon (Welsh: Yr Wyddfa) which, at 1,085 metres (3,560 ft), is the highest peak in Wales. Wales has over 2,704 kilometres (1,680 miles) of coastline. Several islands lie off the Welsh mainland, the largest of which is Anglesey (Ynys Môn) in the north-west. Northern Ireland, separated from Great Britain by the Irish Sea and North Channel, has an area of 14,160 square kilometres (5,470 sq mi) and is mostly hilly. It includes Lough Neagh which, at 388 square kilometres (150 sq mi), is the largest lake in the British Isles by area. The highest peak in Northern Ireland is Slieve Donard in the Mourne Mountains at 852 metres (2,795 ft). === Climate === The United Kingdom has a temperate climate, with plentiful rainfall all year round. The temperature varies with the seasons seldom dropping below -11 °C (12 °F) or rising above 35 °C (95 °F). The prevailing wind is from the south-west and bears frequent spells of mild and wet weather from the Atlantic Ocean, although the eastern parts are mostly sheltered from this wind since the majority of the rain falls over the western regions the eastern parts are therefore the driest. Atlantic currents, warmed by the Gulf Stream, bring mild winters; especially in the west where winters are wet and even more so over high ground. Summers are warmest in the south-east of England, being closest to the European mainland, and coolest in the north. Heavy snowfall can occur in winter and early spring on high ground, and occasionally settles to great depth away from the hills. === Administrative divisions === Each country of the United Kingdom has its own arrangements, whose origins often pre-date the UK's formation, meaning there is no consistent system of administrative or geographic demarcation across the United Kingdom. Until the 19th century there was little change to those arrangements, but there has since been a constant evolution of role and function. The organisation of local government in England is complex, with the distribution of functions varying according to local arrangements. The upper-tier subdivisions of England are the nine regions, now used primarily for statistical purposes. One region, Greater London, has had a directly elected assembly and mayor since 2000 following popular support for the proposal in a referendum. It was intended that other regions would also be given their own elected regional assemblies, but a proposed assembly in the North East region was rejected by a referendum in 2004. Below the regional tier, some parts of England have county councils and district councils and others have unitary authorities; while London consists of 32 London boroughs and the City of London. Councillors are elected by the first-past-the-post system in single-member wards or by the multi-member plurality system in multi-member wards. For local government purposes, Scotland is divided into 32 council areas, with wide variation in both size and population. The cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee are separate council areas, as is the Highland Council, which includes a third of Scotland's area but only just over 200,000 people. Local councils are made up of elected councillors, of whom there are 1,223; they are paid a part-time salary. Elections are conducted by single transferable vote in multi-member wards that elect either three or four councillors. Each council elects a Provost, or Convenor, to chair meetings of the council and to act as a figurehead for the area. Local government in Wales consists of 22 unitary authorities. These include the cities of Cardiff, Swansea and Newport, which are unitary authorities in their own right. Elections are held every four years under the first-past-the-post system. Local government in Northern Ireland has since 1973 been organised into 26 district councils, each elected by single transferable vote. Their powers are limited to services such as collecting waste, controlling dogs and maintaining parks and cemeteries. In 2008 the executive agreed on proposals to create 11 new councils and replace the present system. == Dependencies == The United Kingdom has sovereignty over seventeen territories which do not form part of the United Kingdom itself: fourteen British Overseas Territories and three Crown dependencies. The fourteen British Overseas Territories are: Anguilla; Bermuda; the British Antarctic Territory; the British Indian Ocean Territory; the British Virgin Islands; the Cayman Islands; the Falkland Islands; Gibraltar; Montserrat; Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha; the Turks and Caicos Islands; the Pitcairn Islands; South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands; and Akrotiri and Dhekelia on the island of Cyprus. British claims in Antarctica are not universally recognised. Collectively Britain's overseas territories encompass an approximate land area of 1,727,570 square kilometres (667,018 sq mi) and a population of approximately 260,000 people. They are the last remaining remnants of the British Empire and a 1999 UK government white paper stated that: "[The] Overseas Territories are British for as long as they wish to remain British. Britain has willingly granted independence where it has been requested; and we will continue to do so where this is an option." Self-determination is also enshrined into the constitutions of several overseas territories and three have specifically voted to remain under British sovereignty (Bermuda in 1995, Gibraltar in 2002 and the Falkland Islands in 2013). The Crown

dependencies are possessions of the Crown, as opposed to overseas territories of the UK. They comprise three independently administered jurisdictions: the Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey in the English Channel, and the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea. By mutual agreement, the British Government manages the islands' foreign affairs and defence and the UK Parliament has the authority to legislate on their behalf. However, internationally, they are regarded as "territories for which the United Kingdom is responsible". The power to pass legislation affecting the islands ultimately rests with their own respective legislative assemblies, with the assent of the Crown (Privy Council or, in the case of the Isle of Man, in certain circumstances the Lieutenant-Governor). Since 2005 each Crown dependency has had a Chief Minister as its head of government. The British dependencies use a varied assortment of currencies. These include the British pound, US dollar, New Zealand dollar, euro or their own currencies, which may be pegged to either.

== Politics ==

The United Kingdom is a unitary state under a constitutional monarchy. Queen Elizabeth II is the monarch and head of state of the UK, as well as Queen of fifteen other independent Commonwealth countries. The monarch has "the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, and the right to warn". The Constitution of the United Kingdom is uncoded and consists mostly of a collection of disparate written sources, including statutes, judge-made case law and international treaties, together with constitutional conventions. As there is no technical difference between ordinary statutes and "constitutional law", the UK Parliament can perform "constitutional reform" simply by passing Acts of Parliament, and thus has the political power to change or abolish almost any written or unwritten element of the constitution. However, no Parliament can pass laws that future Parliaments cannot change.

=== Government ===

The UK has a parliamentary government based on the Westminster system that has been emulated around the world: a legacy of the British Empire. The parliament of the United Kingdom meets in the Palace of Westminster and has two houses: an elected House of Commons and an appointed House of Lords. All bills passed are given Royal Assent before becoming law. The position of prime minister, the UK's head of government, belongs to the person most likely to command the confidence of the House of Commons; this individual is typically the leader of the political party or coalition of parties that holds the largest number of seats in that chamber. The prime minister chooses a cabinet and its members are formally appointed by the monarch to form Her Majesty's Government. By convention, the monarch respects the prime minister's decisions of government. The cabinet is traditionally drawn from members of the prime minister's party or coalition and mostly from the House of Commons but always from both legislative houses, the cabinet being responsible to both. Executive power is exercised by the prime minister and cabinet, all of whom are sworn into the Privy Council of the United Kingdom, and become Ministers of the Crown. The current Prime Minister is Theresa May, who has been in office since 13 July 2016. May is also the leader of the Conservative Party. For elections to the House of Commons, the UK is divided into 650 constituencies, each electing a single member of parliament (MP) by simple plurality. General elections are called by the monarch when the prime minister so advises. Prior to the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011, the Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949 required that a new election must be called no later than five years after the previous general election. The Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats (formerly as the Liberal Party) have, in modern times, been considered the UK's three major political parties, representing the British traditions of conservatism, socialism and liberalism, respectively. However, in both the 2015 and 2017 general elections, the Scottish National Party was the third-largest party by number of seats won, ahead of the Liberal Democrats. Most of the remaining seats were won by parties that contest elections only in one part of the UK: Plaid Cymru (Wales only); and the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin (Northern Ireland only). In accordance with party policy, no elected Sinn Féin members of parliament have ever attended the House of Commons to speak on behalf of their constituents because of the requirement to take an oath of allegiance to the monarch.

=== Devolved administrations ===

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each have their own government or executive, led by a First Minister (or, in the case of Northern Ireland, a diarchal First Minister and deputy First Minister), and a devolved unicameral legislature. England, the largest country of the United Kingdom, has no such devolved executive or legislature and is administered and legislated for directly by the UK's government and parliament on all issues. This situation has given rise to the so-called West Lothian question, which concerns the fact that members of parliament from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can vote, sometimes decisively, on matters that affect only England. The 2013 McKay Commission on this recommended that laws affecting only England should need support from a majority of English members of parliament. The Scottish Government and Parliament have wide-ranging powers over any matter that has not been specifically reserved to the UK Parliament, including education, healthcare, Scots law and local government. In 2012, the UK and

Scottish governments signed the Edinburgh Agreement setting out the terms for a referendum on Scottish independence in 2014, which was defeated 55.3% to 44.7%. The Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales have more limited powers than those devolved to Scotland. The Assembly is able to legislate on devolved matters through Acts of the Assembly, which require no prior consent from Westminster. The Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly have powers similar to those devolved to Scotland. The Executive is led by a diarchy representing unionist and nationalist members of the Assembly. Devolution to Northern Ireland is contingent on participation by the Northern Ireland administration in the North-South Ministerial Council, where the Northern Ireland Executive cooperates and develops joint and shared policies with the Government of Ireland. The British and Irish governments co-operate on non-devolved matters affecting Northern Ireland through the British–Irish Intergovernmental Conference, which assumes the responsibilities of the Northern Ireland administration in the event of its non-operation. The UK does not have a codified constitution and constitutional matters are not among the powers devolved to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. Under the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty, the UK Parliament could, in theory, therefore, abolish the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly or Northern Ireland Assembly. Indeed, in 1972, the UK Parliament unilaterally prorogued the Parliament of Northern Ireland, setting a precedent relevant to contemporary devolved institutions. In practice, it would be politically difficult for the UK Parliament to abolish devolution to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, given the political entrenchment created by referendum decisions. The political constraints placed upon the UK Parliament's power to interfere with devolution in Northern Ireland are even greater than in relation to Scotland and Wales, given that devolution in Northern Ireland rests upon an international agreement with the Government of Ireland. === Law and criminal justice === The United Kingdom does not have a single legal system as Article 19 of the 1706 Treaty of Union provided for the continuation of Scotland's separate legal system. Today the UK has three distinct systems of law: English law, Northern Ireland law and Scots law. A new Supreme Court of the United Kingdom came into being in October 2009 to replace the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, including the same members as the Supreme Court, is the highest court of appeal for several independent Commonwealth countries, the British Overseas Territories and the Crown Dependencies. Both English law, which applies in England and Wales, and Northern Ireland law are based on common-law principles. The essence of common law is that, subject to statute, the law is developed by judges in courts, applying statute, precedent and common sense to the facts before them to give explanatory judgements of the relevant legal principles, which are reported and binding in future similar cases (*stare decisis*). The courts of England and Wales are headed by the Senior Courts of England and Wales, consisting of the Court of Appeal, the High Court of Justice (for civil cases) and the Crown Court (for criminal cases). The Supreme Court is the highest court in the land for both criminal and civil appeal cases in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and any decision it makes is binding on every other court in the same jurisdiction, often having a persuasive effect in other jurisdictions. Scots law is a hybrid system based on both common-law and civil-law principles. The chief courts are the Court of Session, for civil cases, and the High Court of Justiciary, for criminal cases. The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom serves as the highest court of appeal for civil cases under Scots law. Sheriff courts deal with most civil and criminal cases including conducting criminal trials with a jury, known as sheriff solemn court, or with a sheriff and no jury, known as sheriff summary Court. The Scots legal system is unique in having three possible verdicts for a criminal trial: "guilty", "not guilty" and "not proven". Both "not guilty" and "not proven" result in an acquittal. Crime in England and Wales increased in the period between 1981 and 1995, though since that peak there has been an overall fall of 66% in recorded crime from 1995 to 2015, according to crime statistics. The prison population of England and Wales has increased to 86,000, giving England and Wales the highest rate of incarceration in Western Europe at 148 per 100,000. Her Majesty's Prison Service, which reports to the Ministry of Justice, manages most of the prisons within England and Wales. The murder rate in England and Wales has stabilised in the first half of the 2010s with a murder rate around 1 per 100,000 which is half the peak in 2002 and similar to the rate in the 1980s. Crime in Scotland fell slightly in 2014/2015 to its lowest level in 39 years in with 59 killings for a murder rate of 1.1 per 100,000. Scotland's prisons are overcrowded but the prison population is shrinking. === Foreign relations === The UK is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, a member of NATO, the Commonwealth of Nations, the G7 finance ministers, the G7 forum (previously the G8 forum), the G20, the OECD, the WTO, the Council of Europe, the OSCE. It is also a member state of the European Union in the process of withdrawal. The UK is said to have a "Special Relationship" with the United States and a close partnership with France—the "Entente



cordiale"—and shares nuclear weapons technology with both countries—; the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance is considered to be the oldest currently binding military alliance in the world. The UK is also closely linked with the Republic of Ireland; the two countries share a Common Travel Area and co-operate through the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and the British-Irish Council. Britain's global presence and influence is further amplified through its trading relations, foreign investments, official development assistance and military engagements. === Military === The armed forces of the United Kingdom—officially, Her Majesty's Armed Forces—consist of three professional service branches: the Royal Navy and Royal Marines (forming the Naval Service), the British Army and the Royal Air Force. The forces are managed by the Ministry of Defence and controlled by the Defence Council, chaired by the Secretary of State for Defence. The Commander-in-Chief is the British monarch, to whom members of the forces swear an oath of allegiance. The Armed Forces are charged with protecting the UK and its overseas territories, promoting the UK's global security interests and supporting international peacekeeping efforts. They are active and regular participants in NATO, including the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, as well as the Five Power Defence Arrangements, RIMPAC and other worldwide coalition operations. Overseas garrisons and facilities are maintained in Ascension Island, Belize, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Diego Garcia, the Falkland Islands, Germany, Gibraltar, Kenya, Qatar and Singapore. The British armed forces played a key role in establishing the British Empire as the dominant world power in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. By emerging victorious from conflicts, Britain has often been able to decisively influence world events. Since the end of the British Empire, the UK has remained a major military power. Following the end of the Cold War, defence policy has a stated assumption that "the most demanding operations" will be undertaken as part of a coalition. UK military operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, have followed this approach. Setting aside the intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000, the last occasion on which the British military fought alone was the Falklands War of 1982. According to various sources, including the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the United Kingdom has the fourth- or fifth-highest military expenditure in the world. Total defence spending amounts to 2.0% of national GDP. == Economy == === Overview === The UK has a partially regulated market economy. Based on market exchange rates, the UK is today the fifth-largest economy in the world and the second-largest in Europe after Germany. HM Treasury, led by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is responsible for developing and executing the government's public finance policy and economic policy. The Bank of England is the UK's central bank and is responsible for issuing notes and coins in the nation's currency, the pound sterling. Banks in Scotland and Northern Ireland retain the right to issue their own notes, subject to retaining enough Bank of England notes in reserve to cover their issue. The pound sterling is the world's third-largest reserve currency (after the US dollar and the euro). Since 1997 the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee, headed by the Governor of the Bank of England, has been responsible for setting interest rates at the level necessary to achieve the overall inflation target for the economy that is set by the Chancellor each year. The UK service sector makes up around 79% of GDP. London is one of the three "command centres" of the global economy (alongside New York City and Tokyo), it is the world's largest financial centre alongside New York, and it has the largest city GDP in Europe. Tourism is very important to the British economy; with over 27 million tourists arriving in 2004, the United Kingdom is ranked as the sixth major tourist destination in the world and London has the most international visitors of any city in the world. The creative industries accounted for 7% GVA in 2005 and grew at an average of 6% per annum between 1997 and 2005. The Industrial Revolution started in the UK with an initial concentration on the textile industry, followed by other heavy industries such as shipbuilding, coal mining and steelmaking. British merchants, shippers and bankers developed overwhelming advantage over those of other nations allowing the UK to dominate international trade in the 19th century. As other nations industrialised, coupled with economic decline after two world wars, the United Kingdom began to lose its competitive advantage and heavy industry declined, by degrees, throughout the 20th century. Manufacturing remains a significant part of the economy but accounted for only 16.7% of national output in 2003. The automotive industry is a significant part of the UK manufacturing sector and employs around 800,000 people, with a turnover in 2015 of £70 billion, generating £34.6 billion of exports (11.8% of the UK's total export goods). In 2015, the UK produced around 1.6 million passenger vehicles and 94,500 commercial vehicles. The UK is a major centre for engine manufacturing: in 2015 around 2.4 million engines were produced. The UK motorsport industry employs around 41,000 people, comprises around 4,500 companies and has an annual turnover of around £6 billion. The aerospace industry of the UK is the second- or third-largest national aerospace industry in the world depending upon the method of measurement and has an

annual turnover of around £30 billion. The wings for the Airbus A380 and the A350 XWB are designed and manufactured at Airbus UK's world-leading Broughton facility, whilst over a quarter of the value of the Boeing 787 comes from UK manufacturers including Eaton, Messier-Bugatti-Dowty and Rolls-Royce. BAE Systems plays a critical role in some of the world's biggest defence aerospace projects. In the UK, the company makes large sections of the Typhoon Eurofighter and assembles the aircraft for the Royal Air Force. It is also a principal subcontractor on the F35 Joint Strike Fighter—the world's largest single defence project—for which it designs and manufactures a range of components. It also manufactures the Hawk, the world's most successful jet training aircraft. Airbus UK also manufactures the wings for the A400 m military transporter. Rolls-Royce is the world's second-largest aero-engine manufacturer. Its engines power more than 30 types of commercial aircraft and it has more than 30,000 engines in service in the civil and defence sectors. The UK space industry was worth £9.1bn in 2011 and employed 29,000 people. It is growing at a rate of 7.5% annually, according to its umbrella organisation, the UK Space Agency. In 2013, the British Government pledged £60 m to the Skylon project: this investment will provide support at a "crucial stage" to allow a full-scale prototype of the SABRE engine to be built. The pharmaceutical industry plays an important role in the UK economy and the country has the third-highest share of global pharmaceutical R&D expenditures. Agriculture is intensive, highly mechanised and efficient by European standards, producing about 60% of food needs with less than 1.6% of the labour force (535,000 workers). Around two-thirds of production is devoted to livestock, one-third to arable crops. Farmers are subsidised by the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. The UK retains a significant, though much reduced fishing industry. It is also rich in a number of natural resources including coal, petroleum, natural gas, tin, limestone, iron ore, salt, clay, chalk, gypsum, lead, silica and an abundance of arable land. In the final quarter of 2008, the UK economy officially entered recession for the first time since 1991. Following the likes of the United States, France and many major economies, in 2013, the UK lost its top AAA credit rating for the first time since 1978 with Moodys and Fitch credit agency, but, unlike the other major economies, retained its triple A rating with Standard & Poor's. By the end of 2014, UK growth was the fastest in both the G7 and in Europe, and by September 2015, the unemployment rate was down to a seven-year low of 5.3%. Since the 1980s, UK economic inequality, like Canada, Australia and the United States, has grown faster than in other developed countries. The poverty line in the UK is commonly defined as being 60% of the median household income. The Office for National Statistics has estimated that in 2011, 14 million people were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and that one person in 20 (5.1%) was experiencing "severe material depression", up from 3 million people in 1977. The UK has an external debt of \$9.6 trillion dollars, which is the second highest in the world after the US. As a percentage of GDP, external debt is 408%, which is the third highest in the world after Luxembourg and Iceland. The combination of the UK's relatively lax regulatory regime and London's financial institutions providing sophisticated methods to launder proceeds from criminal activity around the world, including those from drug trade, makes the City of London a global hub for illicit finance and the UK a safe haven for the world's major-league tax dodgers, according to research papers and reports published in the mid-2010s. The reports on the Panama papers published in April 2016 singled out the UK as being "at the heart of super-rich tax-avoidance network." == Science and technology == England and Scotland were leading centres of the Scientific Revolution from the 17th century. The United Kingdom led the Industrial Revolution from the 18th century, and has continued to produce scientists and engineers credited with important advances. Major theorists from the 17th and 18th centuries include Isaac Newton, whose laws of motion and illumination of gravity have been seen as a keystone of modern science; from the 19th century Charles Darwin, whose theory of evolution by natural selection was fundamental to the development of modern biology, and James Clerk Maxwell, who formulated classical electromagnetic theory; and more recently Stephen Hawking, who has advanced major theories in the fields of cosmology, quantum gravity and the investigation of black holes. Major scientific discoveries from the 18th century include hydrogen by Henry Cavendish; from the 20th century penicillin by Alexander Fleming, and the structure of DNA, by Francis Crick and others. Famous British engineers and inventors of the Industrial Revolution include James Watt, George Stephenson, Richard Arkwright, Robert Stephenson and Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Other major engineering projects and applications by people from the UK include the steam locomotive, developed by Richard Trevithick and Andrew Vivian; from the 19th century the electric motor by Michael Faraday, the incandescent light bulb by Joseph Swan, and the first practical telephone, patented by Alexander Graham Bell; and in the 20th century the world's first working television system by John Logie Baird and others, the jet engine by Frank Whittle, the basis of the modern computer by Alan Turing, and the World Wide Web by Tim Berners-Lee. Scientific research

and development remains important in British universities, with many establishing science parks to facilitate production and co-operation with industry. Between 2004 and 2008 the UK produced 7% of the world's scientific research papers and had an 8% share of scientific citations, the third and second highest in the world (after the United States and China, respectively). Scientific journals produced in the UK include *Nature*, the *British Medical Journal* and *The Lancet*.

=== Transport === A radial road network totals 29,145 miles (46,904 km) of main roads, 2,173 miles (3,497 km) of motorways and 213,750 miles (344,000 km) of paved roads. The M25, encircling London, is the largest and busiest bypass in the world. In 2009 there were a total of 34 million licensed vehicles in Great Britain. The UK has a railway network of 10,072 miles (16,209 km) in Great Britain and 189 miles (304 km) in Northern Ireland. Railways in Northern Ireland are operated by NI Railways, a subsidiary of state-owned Translink. In Great Britain, the British Rail network was privatised between 1994 and 1997, which was followed by a rapid rise in passenger numbers following years of decline, although the factors behind this are disputed. Network Rail owns and manages most of the fixed assets (tracks, signals etc.). About 20 privately owned Train Operating Companies operate passenger trains, which carried 1.68 billion passengers in 2015. There are also some 1,000 freight trains in daily operation. The British Government is to spend £30 billion on a new high-speed railway line, HS2, to be operational by 2026. Crossrail, under construction in London, is Europe's largest construction project with a £15 billion projected cost. In the year from October 2009 to September 2010 UK airports handled a total of 211.4 million passengers. In that period the three largest airports were London Heathrow Airport (65.6 million passengers), Gatwick Airport (31.5 million passengers) and London Stansted Airport (18.9 million passengers). London Heathrow Airport, located 15 miles (24 km) west of the capital, has the most international passenger traffic of any airport in the world and is the hub for the UK flag carrier British Airways, as well as Virgin Atlantic.

=== Energy === In 2006, the UK was the world's ninth-largest consumer of energy and the 15th-largest producer. The UK is home to a number of large energy companies, including two of the six oil and gas "supermajors"—BP and Royal Dutch Shell. In 2011, 40% of the UK's electricity was produced by gas, 30% by coal, 19% by nuclear power and 4.2% by wind, hydro, biofuels and wastes. In 2013, the UK produced 914 thousand barrels per day (bbl/d) of oil and consumed 1,507 thousand bbl/d. Production is now in decline and the UK has been a net importer of oil since 2005. In 2010 the UK had around 3.1 billion barrels of proven crude oil reserves, the largest of any EU member state. In 2009, the UK was the 13th-largest producer of natural gas in the world and the largest producer in the EU. Production is now in decline and the UK has been a net importer of natural gas since 2004. Coal production played a key role in the UK economy in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the mid-1970s, 130 million tonnes of coal were produced annually, not falling below 100 million tonnes until the early 1980s. During the 1980s and 1990s the industry was scaled back considerably. In 2011, the UK produced 18.3 million tonnes of coal. In 2005 it had proven recoverable coal reserves of 171 million tons. The UK Coal Authority has stated there is a potential to produce between 7 billion tonnes and 16 billion tonnes of coal through underground coal gasification (UCG) or 'fracking', and that, based on current UK coal consumption, such reserves could last between 200 and 400 years. However, environmental and social concerns have been raised over chemicals getting into the water table and minor earthquakes damaging homes. In the late 1990s, nuclear power plants contributed around 25% of total annual electricity generation in the UK, but this has gradually declined as old plants have been shut down and ageing-related problems affect plant availability. In 2012, the UK had 16 reactors normally generating about 19% of its electricity. All but one of the reactors will be retired by 2023. Unlike Germany and Japan, the UK intends to build a new generation of nuclear plants from about 2018. The total of all renewable electricity sources provided for 14.9% of the electricity generated in the United Kingdom in 2013, reaching 53.7 TWh of electricity generated. The UK is one of the best sites in Europe for wind energy, and wind power production is its fastest growing supply, in 2014 it generated 9.3% of the UK's total electricity.

=== Water supply and sanitation === Access to improved water supply and sanitation in the UK is universal. It is estimated that 96.7% of households are connected to the sewer network. According to the Environment Agency, total water abstraction for public water supply in the UK was 16,406 megalitres per day in 2007. Drinking water standards and wastewater discharge standards in the UK, as in other countries of the European Union, are determined by the EU (see Water supply and sanitation in the European Union). In England and Wales water and sewerage services are provided by 10 private regional water and sewerage companies and 13 mostly smaller private "water only" companies. In Scotland water and sewerage services are provided by a single public company, Scottish Water. In Northern Ireland water and sewerage services are also provided by a single public entity, Northern Ireland Water.

== Demographics == A census is

taken simultaneously in all parts of the UK every ten years. In the 2011 census the total population of the United Kingdom was 63,181,775. It is the third-largest in the European Union, the fifth-largest in the Commonwealth and the 22nd-largest in the world. In mid-2014 and mid-2015 net long-term international migration contributed more to population growth. In mid-2012 and mid-2013 natural change contributed the most to population growth. Between 2001 and 2011 the population increased by an average annual rate of approximately 0.7%. This compares to 0.3% per year in the period 1991 to 2001 and 0.2% in the decade 1981 to 1991. The 2011 census also confirmed that the proportion of the population aged 0–14 has nearly halved (31% in 1911 compared to 18 in 2011) and the proportion of older people aged 65 and over has more than tripled (from 5 to 16%). England's population in 2011 was 53 million. It is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with 420 people resident per square kilometre in mid-2015, with a particular concentration in London and the south-east. The 2011 census put Scotland's population at 5.3 million, Wales at 3.06 million and Northern Ireland at 1.81 million. In 2012 the average total fertility rate (TFR) across the UK was 1.92 children per woman. While a rising birth rate is contributing to current population growth, it remains considerably below the 'baby boom' peak of 2.95 children per woman in 1964, below the replacement rate of 2.1, but higher than the 2001 record low of 1.63. In 2011, 47.3% of births in the UK were to unmarried women. The Office for National Statistics published a bulletin in 2015 showing that, out of the UK population aged 16 and over, 1.7% identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (2.0% of males and 1.5% of females). 4.5% of respondents responded with "other", "I don't know", or did not respond. === Ethnic groups === Historically, indigenous British people were thought to be descended from the various ethnic groups that settled there before the 11th century: the Celts, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Norse and the Normans. Welsh people could be the oldest ethnic group in the UK. A 2006 genetic study shows that more than 50% of England's gene pool contains Germanic Y chromosomes. Another 2005 genetic analysis indicates that "about 75% of the traceable ancestors of the modern British population had arrived in the British isles by about 6,200 years ago, at the start of the British Neolithic or Stone Age", and that the British broadly share a common ancestry with the Basque people. The UK has a history of small-scale non-white immigration, with Liverpool having the oldest Black population in the country dating back to at least the 1730s during the period of the African slave trade. During this period it is estimated the Afro-Caribbean population of Great Britain was 10,000 to 15,000 which later declined due to the abolition of slavery. The UK also has the oldest Chinese community in Europe, dating to the arrival of Chinese seamen in the 19th century. In 1950 there were probably fewer than 20,000 non-white residents in Britain, almost all born overseas. In 1951 there were an estimated 94,500 people living in Britain who had been born in South Asia, China, Africa and the Caribbean, just under 0.2% of the UK population. By 1961 this number had more than quadrupled to 384,000, just over 0.7% of the United Kingdom population. Since 1948 substantial immigration from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia has been a legacy of ties forged by the British Empire. Migration from new EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe since 2004 has resulted in growth in these population groups, although some of this migration has been temporary. Since the 1990s, there has been substantial diversification of the immigrant population, with migrants to the UK coming from a much wider range of countries than previous waves, which tended to involve larger numbers of migrants coming from a relatively small number of countries. Academics have argued that the ethnicity categories employed in British national statistics, which were first introduced in the 1991 census, involve confusion between the concepts of ethnicity and race. In 2011, 87.2% of the UK population identified themselves as white, meaning 12.8% of the UK population identify themselves as one of number of ethnic minority groups. In the 2001 census, this figure was 7.9% of the UK population. Because of differences in the wording of the census forms used in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, data on the Other White group is not available for the UK as a whole, but in England and Wales this was the fastest growing group between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, increasing by 1.1 million (1.8 percentage points). Amongst groups for which comparable data is available for all parts of the UK level, the Other Asian category increased from 0.4 to 1.4% of the population between 2001 and 2011, while the Mixed category rose from 1.2% to 2%. Ethnic diversity varies significantly across the UK. 30.4% of London's population and 37.4% of Leicester's was estimated to be non-white in 2005, whereas less than 5% of the populations of North East England, Wales and the South West were from ethnic minorities, according to the 2001 census. In 2016, 31.4% of primary and 27.9% of secondary pupils at state schools in England were members of an ethnic minority. === Languages === The UK's de facto official language is English. It is estimated that 95% of the UK's population are monolingual English speakers. 5.5% of the population are estimated to speak languages brought to the UK as a result of relatively recent immigration. South

Asian languages, including Punjabi, Hindi, Bengali and Gujarati, are the largest grouping and are spoken by 2.7% of the UK population. According to the 2011 census, Polish has become the second-largest language spoken in England and has 546,000 speakers. Four Celtic languages are spoken in the UK: Welsh, Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Cornish. All are recognised as regional or minority languages, subject to specific measures of protection and promotion under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. In the 2001 Census over a fifth (21%) of the population of Wales said they could speak Welsh, an increase from the 1991 Census (18%). In addition it is estimated that about 200,000 Welsh speakers live in England. In the same census in Northern Ireland 167,487 people (10.4%) stated that they had "some knowledge of Irish" (see Irish language in Northern Ireland), almost exclusively in the nationalist (mainly Catholic) population. Over 92,000 people in Scotland (just under 2% of the population) had some Gaelic language ability, including 72% of those living in the Outer Hebrides. The number of schoolchildren being taught through Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Irish is increasing. Among emigrant-descended populations some Scottish Gaelic is still spoken in Canada (principally Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island), and Welsh in Patagonia, Argentina. Scots, a language descended from early northern Middle English, has limited recognition alongside its regional variant, Ulster Scots in Northern Ireland, without specific commitments to protection and promotion. It is compulsory for pupils to study a second language up to the age of 14 in England. French and German are the two most commonly taught second languages in England and Scotland. All pupils in Wales are taught Welsh as a second language up to age 16, or are taught in Welsh. === Religion === Forms of Christianity have dominated religious life in what is now the United Kingdom for over 1400 years. Although a majority of citizens still identify with Christianity in many surveys, regular church attendance has fallen dramatically since the middle of the 20th century, while immigration and demographic change have contributed to the growth of other faiths, most notably Islam. This has led some commentators to variously describe the UK as a multi-faith, secularised, or post-Christian society. In the 2001 census 71.6% of all respondents indicated that they were Christians, with the next largest faiths being Islam (2.8%), Hinduism (1.0%), Sikhism (0.6%), Judaism (0.5%), Buddhism (0.3%) and all other religions (0.3%). 15% of respondents stated that they had no religion, with a further 7% not stating a religious preference. A Tearfund survey in 2007 showed only one in ten Britons actually attend church weekly. Between the 2001 and 2011 census there was a decrease in the number of people who identified as Christian by 12%, whilst the percentage of those reporting no religious affiliation doubled. This contrasted with growth in the other main religious group categories, with the number of Muslims increasing by the most substantial margin to a total of about 5%. The Muslim population has increased from 1.6 million in 2001 to 2.7 million in 2011, making it the second-largest religious group in the United Kingdom. In a 2016 survey conducted by BSA (British Social Attitudes) on religious affiliation; 53% of respondents indicated 'no religion', while 41% indicated they were Christians, followed by 6% who affiliated with other religions (e.g. Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, etc.). Among Christians, adherents to the Church of England constituted 15%, Roman Catholic Church – 9%, other Christians (including Presbyterians, Methodists, other Protestants, as well as Eastern Orthodox) – 17%. 71% of young people aged 18–24 said they had no religion. The Church of England is the established church in England. It retains a representation in the UK Parliament and the British monarch is its Supreme Governor. In Scotland, the Church of Scotland is recognised as the national church. It is not subject to state control, and the British monarch is an ordinary member, required to swear an oath to "maintain and preserve the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Government" upon his or her accession. The Church in Wales was disestablished in 1920 and, as the Church of Ireland was disestablished in 1870 before the partition of Ireland, there is no established church in Northern Ireland. Although there are no UK-wide data in the 2001 census on adherence to individual Christian denominations, it has been estimated that 62% of Christians are Anglican, 13.5% Catholic, 6% Presbyterian, 3.4% Methodist with small numbers of other Protestant denominations such as Plymouth Brethren, and Orthodox churches. === Migration === The United Kingdom has experienced successive waves of migration. The Great Famine in Ireland, then part of the United Kingdom, resulted in perhaps a million people migrating to Great Britain. Throughout the 19th century a small population of German immigrants built up, numbering 28,644 in England and Wales in 1861. London held around half of this population, and other small communities existed in Manchester, Bradford and elsewhere. The German immigrant community was the largest group until 1891, when it became second only to Russian Jews. England has had small Jewish communities for many centuries, subject to occasional expulsions, but British Jews numbered fewer than 10,000 at the start of the 19th century. After 1881 Russian Jews suffered

bitter persecutions, and, out of some 2,000,000 who left Russia by 1914, around 120,000 settled permanently in Britain, overtaking the Germans to be the largest ethnic minority from outside the British Isles. The population increasing to 370,000 in 1938. Unable to return to Poland at the end of the Second World War, over 120,000 Polish veterans remained in the UK permanently. After the Second World War, there was significant immigration from the colonies and newly independent former colonies, partly as a legacy of empire and partly driven by labour shortages. Many of these migrants came from the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent. In 1841, 0.25% of the population of England and Wales was born in a foreign country. In 1901, 1.5% of the population was foreign born. By 1931, this figure had risen to 2.6%, and by 1951 it was 4.4%. In 2014 the net increase was 318,000: immigration was 641,000, up from 526,000 in 2013, while the number of people emigrating (for more than 12 months) was 323,000. One of the more recent trends in migration has been the arrival of workers from the new EU member states in Eastern Europe, known as the A8 countries. In 2010, there were 7.0 million foreign-born residents in the UK, corresponding to 11.3% of the total population. Of these, 4.76 million (7.7%) were born outside the EU and 2.24 million (3.6%) were born in another EU Member State. The proportion of foreign-born people in the UK remains slightly below that of many other European countries. However, immigration is now contributing to a rising population with arrivals and UK-born children of migrants accounting for about half of the population increase between 1991 and 2001. Analysis of Office for National Statistics (ONS) data shows that a net total of 2.3 million migrants moved to the UK in the 15 years from 1991 to 2006. In 2008 it was predicted that migration would add 7 million to the UK population by 2031, though these figures are disputed. The ONS reported that net migration rose from 2009 to 2010 by 21% to 239,000. In 2013, approximately 208,000 foreign citizens were naturalised as British citizens, the highest number since records began in 1962. This figure fell to around 125,800 in 2014. Between 2009 and 2013, the average number of people granted British citizenship per year was 195,800. The main countries of previous nationality of those naturalised in 2014 were India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Nepal, China, South Africa, Poland and Somalia. The total number of grants of settlement, which confers permanent residence in the UK without granting British citizenship, was approximately 154,700 in 2013, compared to 241,200 in 2010 and 129,800 in 2012. Over a quarter (27.0%) of live births in 2014 were to mothers born outside the UK, according to official statistics released in 2015. Citizens of the European Union, including those of the UK, have the right to live and work in any EU member state. The UK applied temporary restrictions to citizens of Romania and Bulgaria, which joined the EU in January 2007. Research conducted by the Migration Policy Institute for the Equality and Human Rights Commission suggests that, between May 2004 and September 2009, 1.5 million workers migrated from the new EU member states to the UK, two-thirds of them Polish, but that many subsequently returned home, resulting in a net increase in the number of nationals of the new member states in the UK of some 700,000 over that period. The late-2000s recession in the UK reduced the economic incentive for Poles to migrate to the UK, the migration becoming temporary and circular. In 2009, for the first time since enlargement, more nationals of the eight central and eastern European states that had joined the EU in 2004 left the UK than arrived. In 2011, citizens of the new EU member states made up 13% of the immigrants entering the country. The British Government has introduced a points-based immigration system for immigration from outside the European Economic Area to replace former schemes, including the Scottish Government's Fresh Talent Initiative. In June 2010 the government introduced a temporary limit of 24,000 on immigration from outside the EU, aiming to discourage applications before a permanent cap was imposed in April 2011. Emigration was an important feature of British society in the 19th century. Between 1815 and 1930 around 11.4 million people emigrated from Britain and 7.3 million from Ireland. Estimates show that by the end of the 20th century some 300 million people of British and Irish descent were permanently settled around the globe. Today, at least 5.5 million UK-born people live abroad, mainly in Australia, Spain, the United States and Canada. === Education === Education in the United Kingdom is a devolved matter, with each country having a separate education system. Considering the four systems together, about 38 percent of the United Kingdom population has a university or college degree, which is the highest percentage in Europe, and among the highest percentages in the world. The United Kingdom trails only the United States in terms of representation on lists of top 100 universities. A government commission's report in 2014 found that privately educated people comprise 7% of the general population of the UK but much larger percentages of the top professions, the most extreme case quoted being 71% of senior judges. England Whilst education in England is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Education, the day-to-day administration and funding of state schools is the responsibility of local authorities. Universally free of charge state education was

introduced piecemeal between 1870 and 1944. Education is now mandatory from ages five to sixteen, and in England youngsters must stay in education or training until they are 18. In 2011, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) rated 13–14-year-old pupils in England and Wales 10th in the world for maths and 9th for science. The majority of children are educated in state-sector schools, a small proportion of which select on the grounds of academic ability. Two of the top ten performing schools in terms of GCSE results in 2006 were state-run grammar schools. In 2010, over half of places at the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge were taken by students from state schools, while the proportion of children in England attending private schools is around 7% which rises to 18% of those over 16. England has the two oldest universities in English-speaking world, Universities of Oxford and Cambridge (jointly known as "Oxbridge") with history of over eight centuries. Scotland Education in Scotland is the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, with day-to-day administration and funding of state schools the responsibility of Local Authorities. Two non-departmental public bodies have key roles in Scottish education. The Scottish Qualifications Authority is responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment and certification of qualifications other than degrees which are delivered at secondary schools, post-secondary colleges of further education and other centres. Learning and Teaching Scotland provides advice, resources and staff development to education professionals. Scotland first legislated for compulsory education in 1496. The proportion of children in Scotland attending private schools is just over 4% in 2016, but it has been falling slowly in recent years. Scottish students who attend Scottish universities pay neither tuition fees nor graduate endowment charges, as fees were abolished in 2001 and the graduate endowment scheme was abolished in 2008. Wales The Welsh Government has responsibility for education in Wales. A significant number of Welsh students are taught either wholly or largely in the Welsh language; lessons in Welsh are compulsory for all until the age of 16. There are plans to increase the provision of Welsh-medium schools as part of the policy of creating a fully bilingual Wales. Northern Ireland Education in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Minister of Education, although responsibility at a local level is administered by the Education Authority which is further sub-divided into five geographical areas. The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA) is the body responsible for advising the government on what should be taught in Northern Ireland's schools, monitoring standards and awarding qualifications. === Healthcare === Healthcare in the United Kingdom is a devolved matter and each country has its own system of private and publicly funded health care, together with alternative, holistic and complementary treatments. Public healthcare is provided to all UK permanent residents and is mostly free at the point of need, being paid for from general taxation. The World Health Organization, in 2000, ranked the provision of healthcare in the United Kingdom as fifteenth best in Europe and eighteenth in the world. Since 1979 expenditure on healthcare has been increased significantly to bring it closer to the European Union average. The UK spends around 8.4% of its gross domestic product on healthcare, which is 0.5 percentage points below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development average and about one percentage point below the average of the European Union. Regulatory bodies are organised on a UK-wide basis such as the General Medical Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council and non-governmental-based, such as the Royal Colleges. However, political and operational responsibility for healthcare lies with four national executives; healthcare in England is the responsibility of the UK Government; healthcare in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive; healthcare in Scotland is the responsibility of the Scottish Government; and healthcare in Wales is the responsibility of the Welsh Government. Each National Health Service has different policies and priorities, resulting in contrasts. == Culture == The culture of the United Kingdom has been influenced by many factors including: the nation's island status; its history as a western liberal democracy and a major power; as well as being a political union of four countries with each preserving elements of distinctive traditions, customs and symbolism. As a result of the British Empire, British influence can be observed in the language, culture and legal systems of many of its former colonies including Australia, Canada, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa and the United States. The substantial cultural influence of the United Kingdom has led it to be described as a "cultural superpower". A global opinion poll for the BBC saw the United Kingdom ranked the third most positively viewed nation in the world (behind Germany and Canada) in 2013 and 2014. === Literature === 'British literature' refers to literature associated with the United Kingdom, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Most British literature is in the English language. In 2005, some 206,000 books were published in the United Kingdom and in 2006 it was the largest publisher of books in the world. The English playwright and poet William Shakespeare is widely regarded as the greatest dramatist of all time, and his contemporaries Christopher Marlowe and Ben

Jonson have also been held in continuous high esteem. More recently the playwrights Alan Ayckbourn, Harold Pinter, Michael Frayn, Tom Stoppard and David Edgar have combined elements of surrealism, realism and radicalism. Notable pre-modern and early-modern English writers include Geoffrey Chaucer (14th century), Thomas Malory (15th century), Sir Thomas More (16th century), John Bunyan (17th century) and John Milton (17th century). In the 18th century Daniel Defoe (author of Robinson Crusoe) and Samuel Richardson were pioneers of the modern novel. In the 19th century there followed further innovation by Jane Austen, the gothic novelist Mary Shelley, the children's writer Lewis Carroll, the Brontë sisters, the social campaigner Charles Dickens, the naturalist Thomas Hardy, the realist George Eliot, the visionary poet William Blake and romantic poet William Wordsworth. 20th century English writers include the science-fiction novelist H. G. Wells; the writers of children's classics Rudyard Kipling, A. A. Milne (the creator of Winnie-the-Pooh), Roald Dahl and Enid Blyton; the controversial D. H. Lawrence; the modernist Virginia Woolf; the satirist Evelyn Waugh; the prophetic novelist George Orwell; the popular novelists W. Somerset Maugham and Graham Greene; the crime writer Agatha Christie (the best-selling novelist of all time); Ian Fleming (the creator of James Bond); the poets T.S. Eliot, Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes; the fantasy writers J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis and J. K. Rowling; the graphic novelists Alan Moore and Neil Gaiman. Scotland's contributions include the detective writer Arthur Conan Doyle (the creator of Sherlock Holmes), romantic literature by Sir Walter Scott, the children's writer J. M. Barrie, the epic adventures of Robert Louis Stevenson and the celebrated poet Robert Burns. More recently the modernist and nationalist Hugh MacDiarmid and Neil M. Gunn contributed to the Scottish Renaissance. A more grim outlook is found in Ian Rankin's stories and the psychological horror-comedy of Iain Banks. Scotland's capital, Edinburgh, was UNESCO's first worldwide City of Literature. Britain's oldest known poem, Y Gododdin, was composed in Yr Hen Ogledd (The Old North), most likely in the late 6th century. It was written in Cumbric or Old Welsh and contains the earliest known reference to King Arthur. From around the seventh century, the connection between Wales and the Old North was lost, and the focus of Welsh-language culture shifted to Wales, where Arthurian legend was further developed by Geoffrey of Monmouth. Wales's most celebrated medieval poet, Dafydd ap Gwilym (fl.1320–1370), composed poetry on themes including nature, religion and especially love. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest European poets of his age. Until the late 19th century the majority of Welsh literature was in Welsh and much of the prose was religious in character. Daniel Owen is credited as the first Welsh-language novelist, publishing Rhys Lewis in 1885. The best-known of the Anglo-Welsh poets are both Thomases. Dylan Thomas became famous on both sides of the Atlantic in the mid-20th century. He is remembered for his poetry—his "Do not go gentle into that good night; Rage, rage against the dying of the light" is one of the most quoted couplets of English language verse—and for his "play for voices", Under Milk Wood. The influential Church in Wales "poet-priest" and Welsh nationalist R. S. Thomas was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1996. Leading Welsh novelists of the twentieth century include Richard Llewellyn and Kate Roberts. Authors of other nationalities, particularly from Commonwealth countries, the Republic of Ireland and the United States, have lived and worked in the UK. Significant examples through the centuries include Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde, Bram Stoker, George Bernard Shaw, Joseph Conrad, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and more recently British authors born abroad such as Kazuo Ishiguro and Sir Salman Rushdie.

=== Music === Various styles of music are popular in the UK from the indigenous folk music of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to heavy metal. Notable composers of classical music from the United Kingdom and the countries that preceded it include William Byrd, Henry Purcell, Sir Edward Elgar, Gustav Holst, Sir Arthur Sullivan (most famous for working with the librettist Sir W. S. Gilbert), Ralph Vaughan Williams and Benjamin Britten, pioneer of modern British opera. Sir Harrison Birtwistle is one of the foremost living composers. The UK is also home to world-renowned symphonic orchestras and choruses such as the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the London Symphony Chorus. Notable conductors include Sir Simon Rattle, Sir John Barbirolli and Sir Malcolm Sargent. Some of the notable film score composers include John Barry, Clint Mansell, Mike Oldfield, John Powell, Craig Armstrong, David Arnold, John Murphy, Monty Norman and Harry Gregson-Williams. George Frideric Handel became a naturalised British citizen and wrote the British coronation anthem, while some of his best works, such as Messiah, were written in the English language. Andrew Lloyd Webber is a prolific composer of musical theatre. His works have dominated London's West End since the late 20th century and have also been a commercial success worldwide. The Beatles have international sales of over one billion units and are the biggest-selling and most influential band in the history of popular music. Other prominent British contributors to have influenced popular music over the last 50 years include The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, Queen, Led Zeppelin, the Bee Gees, and Elton



John, all of whom have worldwide record sales of 200 million or more. The Brit Awards are the BPI's annual music awards, and some of the British recipients of the Outstanding Contribution to Music award include; The Who, David Bowie, Eric Clapton, Rod Stewart and The Police. More recent UK music acts that have had international success include Coldplay, Radiohead, Oasis, Arctic Monkeys, Spice Girls, Robbie Williams, Amy Winehouse and Adele. A number of UK cities are known for their music. Acts from Liverpool have had 54 UK chart number one hit singles, more per capita than any other city worldwide. Glasgow's contribution to music was recognised in 2008 when it was named a UNESCO City of Music, one of only three cities in the world to have this honour. === Visual art === The history of British visual art forms part of western art history. Major British artists include: the Romantics William Blake, John Constable, Samuel Palmer and J.M.W. Turner; the portrait painters Sir Joshua Reynolds and Lucian Freud; the landscape artists Thomas Gainsborough and L. S. Lowry; the pioneer of the Arts and Crafts Movement William Morris; the figurative painter Francis Bacon; the Pop artists Peter Blake, Richard Hamilton and David Hockney; the collaborative duo Gilbert and George; the abstract artist Howard Hodgkin; and the sculptors Antony Gormley, Anish Kapoor and Henry Moore. During the late 1980s and 1990s the Saatchi Gallery in London helped to bring to public attention a group of multi-genre artists who would become known as the "Young British Artists": Damien Hirst, Chris Ofili, Rachel Whiteread, Tracey Emin, Mark Wallinger, Steve McQueen, Sam Taylor-Wood and the Chapman Brothers are among the better-known members of this loosely affiliated movement. The Royal Academy in London is a key organisation for the promotion of the visual arts in the United Kingdom. Major schools of art in the UK include: the six-school University of the Arts London, which includes the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design and Chelsea College of Art and Design; Goldsmiths, University of London; the Slade School of Fine Art (part of University College London); the Glasgow School of Art; the Royal College of Art; and The Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art (part of the University of Oxford). The Courtauld Institute of Art is a leading centre for the teaching of the history of art. Important art galleries in the United Kingdom include the National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, Tate Britain and Tate Modern (the most-visited modern art gallery in the world, with around 4.7 million visitors per year). === Cinema === The United Kingdom has had a considerable influence on the history of the cinema. The British directors Alfred Hitchcock, whose film *Vertigo* is considered by some critics as the best film of all time, and David Lean are among the most critically acclaimed of all-time. Other important directors including Charlie Chaplin, Michael Powell, Carol Reed, Edgar Wright, Christopher Nolan, and Ridley Scott. Many British actors have achieved international fame and critical success, including: Julie Andrews, Richard Burton, Michael Caine, Colin Firth, Gary Oldman, Ben Kingsley, Ian McKellen, Liam Neeson, Charlie Chaplin, Sean Connery, Vivien Leigh, David Niven, Laurence Olivier, Peter Sellers, Kate Winslet, Anthony Hopkins, and Daniel Day-Lewis. Some of the most commercially successful films of all time have been produced in the United Kingdom, including two of the highest-grossing film franchises (*Harry Potter* and *James Bond*). Ealing Studios has a claim to being the oldest continuously working film studio in the world. Despite a history of important and successful productions, the industry has often been characterised by a debate about its identity and the level of American and European influence. British producers are active in international co-productions and British actors, directors and crew feature regularly in American films. Many successful Hollywood films have been based on British people, stories or events, including *Titanic*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*. In 2009, British films grossed around \$2 billion worldwide and achieved a market share of around 7% globally and 17% in the United Kingdom. UK box-office takings totalled £944 million in 2009, with around 173 million admissions. The British Film Institute has produced a poll ranking of what it considers to be the 100 greatest British films of all time, the BFI Top 100 British films. The annual British Academy Film Awards are hosted by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts. === Media === The BBC, founded in 1922, is the UK's publicly funded radio, television and Internet broadcasting corporation, and is the oldest and largest broadcaster in the world. It operates numerous television and radio stations in the UK and abroad and its domestic services are funded by the television licence. Other major players in the UK media include ITV plc, which operates 11 of the 15 regional television broadcasters that make up the ITV Network, and News Corporation, which owns a number of national newspapers through News International such as the most popular tabloid *The Sun* and the longest-established daily "broadsheet" *The Times*, as well as holding a large stake in satellite broadcaster British Sky Broadcasting. London dominates the media sector in the UK: national newspapers and television and radio are largely based there, although Manchester is also a significant national media centre. Edinburgh and Glasgow, and Cardiff, are important centres of newspaper and broadcasting production in Scotland and Wales respectively. The UK publishing sector,

including books, directories and databases, journals, magazines and business media, newspapers and news agencies, has a combined turnover of around £20 billion and employs around 167,000 people. In 2009, it was estimated that individuals viewed a mean of 3.75 hours of television per day and 2.81 hours of radio. In that year the main BBC public service broadcasting channels accounted for an estimated 28.4% of all television viewing; the three main independent channels accounted for 29.5% and the increasingly important other satellite and digital channels for the remaining 42.1%. Sales of newspapers have fallen since the 1970s and in 2010 41% of people reported reading a daily national newspaper. In 2010, 82.5% of the UK population were Internet users, the highest proportion amongst the 20 countries with the largest total number of users in that year. === Philosophy === The United Kingdom is famous for the tradition of 'British Empiricism', a branch of the philosophy of knowledge that states that only knowledge verified by experience is valid, and 'Scottish Philosophy', sometimes referred to as the 'Scottish School of Common Sense'. The most famous philosophers of British Empiricism are John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume; while Dugald Stewart, Thomas Reid and William Hamilton were major exponents of the Scottish "common sense" school. Two Britons are also notable for a theory of moral philosophy utilitarianism, first used by Jeremy Bentham and later by John Stuart Mill in his short work Utilitarianism. Other eminent philosophers from the UK and the states and countries that preceded it include Duns Scotus, John Lilburne, Mary Wollstonecraft, Sir Francis Bacon, Adam Smith, Thomas Hobbes, William of Ockham, Bertrand Russell and A.J. "Freddie" Ayer. Foreign-born philosophers who settled in the UK include Isaiah Berlin, Karl Marx, Karl Popper and Ludwig Wittgenstein. === Sport === Major sports, including association football, tennis, rugby union, rugby league, golf, boxing, netball, rowing and cricket, originated or were substantially developed in the UK and the states that preceded it. With the rules and codes of many modern sports invented and codified in late 19th century Victorian Britain, in 2012, the President of the IOC, Jacques Rogge, stated; "This great, sports-loving country is widely recognised as the birthplace of modern sport. It was here that the concepts of sportsmanship and fair play were first codified into clear rules and regulations. It was here that sport was included as an educational tool in the school curriculum". In most international competitions, separate teams represent England, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland usually field a single team representing all of Ireland, with notable exceptions being association football and the Commonwealth Games. In sporting contexts, the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish / Northern Irish teams are often referred to collectively as the Home Nations. There are some sports in which a single team represents the whole of United Kingdom, including the Olympics, where the UK is represented by the Great Britain team. The 1908, 1948 and 2012 Summer Olympics were held in London, making it the first city to host the games three times. Britain has participated in every modern Olympic Games to date and is third in the medal count. A 2003 poll found that football is the most popular sport in the United Kingdom. England is recognised by FIFA as the birthplace of club football, and The Football Association is the oldest of its kind, with the rules of football first drafted in 1863 by Ebenezer Cobb Morley. Each of the Home Nations has its own football association, national team and league system. The English top division, the Premier League, is the most watched football league in the world. The first international football match was contested by England and Scotland on 30 November 1872. England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland usually compete as separate countries in international competitions. In 2003, rugby union was ranked the second most popular sport in the UK. The sport was created in Rugby School, Warwickshire, and the first rugby international took place on 27 March 1871 between England and Scotland. England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France and Italy compete in the Six Nations Championship; the premier international tournament in the northern hemisphere. Sport governing bodies in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland organise and regulate the game separately. Cricket was invented in England, and its laws were established by Marylebone Cricket Club in 1788. The England cricket team, controlled by the England and Wales Cricket Board, and the Irish cricket team, controlled by Cricket Ireland are the only national teams in the UK with Test status. Team members are drawn from the main county sides, and include both English and Welsh players. Cricket is distinct from football and rugby where Wales and England field separate national teams, although Wales had fielded its own team in the past. Irish and Scottish players have played for England because neither Scotland nor Ireland have Test status and have only recently started to play in One Day Internationals and Ireland is yet to play their first test match. Scotland, England (and Wales), and Ireland (including Northern Ireland) have competed at the Cricket World Cup, with England reaching the finals on three occasions. There is a professional league championship in which clubs representing 17 English counties and 1 Welsh county compete. The modern game of tennis originated in Birmingham, England, in the 1860s, before spreading around the world. The world's

oldest tennis tournament, the Wimbledon championships, first occurred in 1877, and today the event takes place over two weeks in late June and early July. Thoroughbred racing, which originated under Charles II of England as the "sport of kings", is popular throughout the UK with world-famous races including the Grand National, the Epsom Derby, Royal Ascot and the Cheltenham National Hunt Festival (including the Cheltenham Gold Cup). The UK has proved successful in the international sporting arena in rowing. The UK is closely associated with motorsport. Many teams and drivers in Formula One (F1) are based in the UK, and the country has won more drivers' and constructors' titles than any other. The UK hosted the first F1 Grand Prix in 1950 at Silverstone, the current location of the British Grand Prix held each year in July. The UK hosts legs of the Grand Prix motorcycle racing, World Rally Championship and FIA World Endurance Championship. The premier national auto racing event is the British Touring Car Championship. Motorcycle road racing has a long tradition with races such as the Isle of Man TT and the North West 200. Golf is the sixth most popular sport, by participation, in the UK. Although The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews in Scotland is the sport's home course, the world's oldest golf course is actually Musselburgh Links' Old Golf Course. In 1764, the standard 18-hole golf course was created at St Andrews when members modified the course from 22 to 18 holes. The oldest golf tournament in the world, and the first major championship in golf, The Open Championship, is played annually on the weekend of the third Friday in July. Rugby league originated in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire in 1895 and is generally played in Northern England. A single 'Great Britain Lions' team had competed in the Rugby League World Cup and Test match games, but this changed in 2008 when England, Scotland and Ireland competed as separate nations. Great Britain is still retained as the full national team. Super League is the highest level of professional rugby league in the UK and Europe. It consists of 11 teams from Northern England, 1 from London, 1 from Wales and 1 from France. The 'Queensberry rules', the code of general rules in boxing, was named after John Douglas, 9th Marquess of Queensberry in 1867, and formed the basis of modern boxing. Snooker is another of the UK's popular sporting exports, with the world championships held annually in Sheffield. In Northern Ireland Gaelic football and hurling are popular team sports, both in terms of participation and spectating, and Irish expatriates in the UK and the US also play them. Shinty (or camanachd) is popular in the Scottish Highlands. Highland games are held in spring and summer in Scotland, celebrating Scottish and Celtic culture and heritage, especially that of the Scottish Highlands. === Symbols === The flag of the United Kingdom is the Union Flag (also referred to as the Union Jack). It was created in 1606 by the superimposition of the Flag of England on the Flag of Scotland and updated in 1801 with the addition of Saint Patrick's Flag. Wales is not represented in the Union Flag, as Wales had been conquered and annexed to England prior to the formation of the United Kingdom. The possibility of redesigning the Union Flag to include representation of Wales has not been completely ruled out. The national anthem of the United Kingdom is "God Save the Queen", with "Queen" replaced with "King" in the lyrics whenever the monarch is a man. Britannia is a national personification of the United Kingdom, originating from Roman Britain. Britannia is symbolised as a young woman with brown or golden hair, wearing a Corinthian helmet and white robes. She holds Poseidon's three-pronged trident and a shield, bearing the Union Flag. Sometimes she is depicted as riding on the back of a lion. Since the height of the British Empire in the late 19th century, Britannia has often been associated with British maritime dominance, as in the patriotic song "Rule, Britannia!". Up until 2008, the lion symbol was depicted behind Britannia on the British fifty pence coin and on the back of the British ten pence coin. It is also used as a symbol on the non-ceremonial flag of the British Army. A second, less used, personification of the nation is the character John Bull. The bulldog is sometimes used as a symbol of the United Kingdom and has been associated with Winston Churchill's defiance of Nazi Germany. == International rankings == The following are international rankings of the United Kingdom, including those measuring life quality, health care quality, stability, press freedom and income. == Historiography == == See also == Outline of the United Kingdom Outline of England Outline of Northern Ireland Outline of Scotland Outline of Wales Index of United Kingdom-related articles United Kingdom – Wikipedia book == Notes == == References == == Further reading == Hitchens, Peter (2000). *The Abolition of Britain: From Winston Churchill to Princess Diana*. Second ed. San Francisco, Calif.: Encounter Books. xi, 332 pp. ISBN 1-893554-18-X. Lambert, Richard S. (1964). *The Great Heritage: A History of Britain for Canadians*. 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