

London^[c] is the **capital** and **largest city**^[d] of both **England** and the **United Kingdom**, with a population of 9.1 million people in 2024.^[2] Its wider metropolitan area is the largest in **Western Europe**, with a population of 15.1 million.^[4] London stands on the **River Thames** in southeast England, at the head of a 50-mile (80 km) **tidal estuary** down to the **North Sea**, and has been a major settlement for nearly 2,000 years.^[7] Its ancient core and **financial centre**, the **City of London**, was founded by the **Romans** as **Londinium** and has retained its medieval boundaries.^{[e][8]} The **City of Westminster**, to the west of the City of London, has been the centuries-long host of **the national government** and **parliament**. London grew rapidly **in the 19th century**, becoming the world's **largest city at the time**. Since the 19th century^[9] the name "London" has referred to the **metropolis** around the City of London, historically split between the **counties** of **Middlesex**, **Essex**, **Surrey**, **Kent** and **Hertfordshire**,^[10] which since 1965 has largely comprised the administrative area of **Greater London**, governed by **33 local authorities** and the **Greater London Authority**.^{[f][11]}

As one of the world's major **global cities**,^{[12][13]} London exerts a strong influence on world **art**, entertainment, **fashion**, commerce, finance, **education**, **healthcare**, **media**, science, technology, **tourism**, **transport** and communications.^{[14][15]} London is Europe's largest city economy,^[16] and is **one of the world's major financial centres**.^[17] London hosts Europe's largest concentration of **higher education institutions**,^[18] comprising over 50 universities and colleges and enrolling more than 500,000 students as at 2023.^[19] It is home to several of the world's leading academic institutions: **Imperial College London**, internationally recognised for its excellence in **natural** and **applied sciences**, and **University College London** (UCL), a comprehensive research-intensive university, consistently rank among the top ten globally.^{[20][21]} Other notable institutions include **King's College London** (KCL), highly regarded in law, **humanities** and **health sciences**; the **London School of Economics** (LSE), globally prominent in **social sciences** and economics; and specialised institutions such as the **Royal College of Art** (RCA), **Royal Academy of Music** (RAM), the **Royal Academy of Dramatic Art** (RADA), the **School of Oriental and African Studies** (SOAS) and **London Business School** (LBS).^[22] It is the **most-visited city** in Europe and has the world's **busiest city airport system**.^[23] The **London Underground** is the world's oldest **rapid transit** system.^[24]

London's diverse cultures encompass over 300 languages.^[25] The 2025 population of Greater London of just over 9.8 million made it Europe's **third-most populous city**,

accounting for 13.1 per cent of the United Kingdom's population and 15.5 per cent of England's population.^[26] The [Greater London Built-up Area](#) is the [fourth-most populous](#) in Europe, with about 9.8 million inhabitants as of 2011.^{[3][27]} The London metropolitan area is the [third-most-populous](#) in Europe, with about 15 million inhabitants as of 2025, making London a [megacity](#).^{[9][28][29]}

Four [World Heritage Sites](#) are located in London: [Kew Gardens](#); the [Tower of London](#); the site featuring the [Palace of Westminster](#), the [Church of St Margaret](#), and [Westminster Abbey](#); and the historic settlement in [Greenwich](#) where the [Royal Observatory](#) defines the [prime meridian](#) (0° longitude) and [Greenwich Mean Time](#).^[30] Other landmarks include [Buckingham Palace](#), the [London Eye](#), [Piccadilly Circus](#), [St Paul's Cathedral](#), [Tower Bridge](#) and [Trafalgar Square](#). The city has the most museums, art galleries, libraries and cultural venues in the UK, including the [British Museum](#), the [National Gallery](#), the [Natural History Museum](#), [Tate Modern](#), the [British Library](#) and numerous [West End](#) theatres.^[31] Important [sporting events held in London](#) include the [FA Cup Final](#), the [Wimbledon Tennis Championships](#) and the [London Marathon](#). It became the first city to host three [Summer Olympic Games](#) upon hosting the [2012 Summer Olympics](#).^[32]

Etymology

Main article: [Etymology of London](#)

London is an ancient name, attested in the first century AD, usually in the [Latinised](#) form [Londinium](#).^[33] Modern scientific analyses of the name must account for the origins of the different forms found in early sources: [Latin](#) (usually *Londinium*), [Old English](#) (usually *Lunden*), and [Welsh](#) (usually *Llundein*), with reference to the known developments over time of sounds in those different languages. It is agreed that the name came into these languages from [Common Brythonic](#); recent work tends to reconstruct the lost Celtic form of the name as **Londonjon* or something similar. This was then adapted into Latin as *Londinium* and borrowed into Old English.^[34]

Until 1889, the name "London" applied officially only to the [City of London](#), but since then it has also referred to the [County of London](#) and to [Greater London](#).^[35]