

= British people =

British people , or Britons , are the citizens of the United Kingdom , British Overseas Territories , and Crown dependencies , and their descendants . British nationality law governs modern British citizenship and nationality , which can be acquired , for instance , by descent from British nationals . When used in a historical context , " British " or " Britons " can refer to the ancient Britons , the indigenous Celtic inhabitants of Great Britain , south of the River Forth .

Although early assertions of being British date from the Late Middle Ages , the creation of the united Kingdom of Great Britain in 1707 triggered a sense of British national identity . The notion of Britishness was forged during the Napoleonic Wars between Britain and the First French Empire , and developed further during the Victorian era . The complex history of the formation of the United Kingdom created a " particular sense of nationhood and belonging " in Great Britain and Ireland ; Britishness became " superimposed on much older identities " , of English , Scots , Welsh and Irish cultures , whose distinctiveness still resists notions of a homogenised British identity . Because of longstanding ethno @-@ sectarian divisions , British identity in Northern Ireland is controversial , but it is held with strong conviction by unionists .

Modern Britons are descended mainly from the varied ethnic groups that settled in the British Isles in and before the 11th century : Prehistoric , Celtic , Roman , Anglo @-@ Saxon , Norse and Normans . Union facilitated migration , cultural and linguistic exchange , and intermarriage between the peoples of England , Scotland and Wales during the late Middle Ages , Early Modern period and beyond . Since 1922 and earlier , there has been immigration to the United Kingdom by people from what is now the Republic of Ireland , the Commonwealth , mainland Europe and elsewhere ; they and their descendants are mostly British citizens , with some assuming a British , dual or hyphenated identity .

The British are a diverse , multi @-@ national and multicultural society , with " strong regional accents , expressions and identities " . The social structure of the United Kingdom has changed radically since the 19th century , with a decline in religious observance , enlargement of the middle class , and increased ethnic diversity . The population of the UK stands at around 62 @.@ 5 million , with a British diaspora of around 140 million concentrated in Australia , Canada , South Africa , Hong Kong , New Zealand , and the United States .

= = History of the term = =

Greek and Roman writers , in the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD , name the inhabitants of Great Britain and Ireland as the Priteni , the origin of the Latin word Britannic . Parthenius , a 1st @-@ century Ancient Greek grammarian , and the Etymologicum Genuinum , a 9th @-@ century lexical encyclopaedia , describe Brettannus ( the Latinised form of the Ancient Greek ????????? ) as the Celtic national forefather of the Britons . It has been suggested that this name derives from a Gaulish description translated as " people of the forms " , referring to the custom of tattooing or painting their bodies with blue woad .

By 50 BC Greek geographers were using equivalents of Prettanik? as a collective name for the British Isles . However , with the Roman conquest of Britain the Latin term Britannia was used for the island of Great Britain , and later Roman @-@ occupied Britain south of Caledonia . Following the Roman departure from Britain , the island of Great Britain was left open to invasion by pagan , seafaring warriors such as Saxons and Jutes , who gained control in areas around the south east .

In this post @-@ Roman period , as the Anglo @-@ Saxons advanced , the Britons became confined to what would later be called Wales , Cornwall , North West England and Strathclyde . However , the term Britannia persisted as the Latin name for the island . The Historia Brittonum claimed legendary origins as a prestigious genealogy for Brittonic kings , followed by the Historia Regum Britanniae which popularised this pseudo @-@ history to support the claims of the Kings of England .

During the Middle Ages , and particularly in the Tudor period , the term " British " was used to refer to the Welsh people . At that time , it was " the long held belief that the Welsh were descendants of

the ancient Britons and that they spoke ' the British tongue ' " . This notion was supported by texts such as the *Historia Regum Britanniae* , a pseudohistorical account of ancient British history , written in the mid @-@ 12th century by Geoffrey of Monmouth . The *Historia Regum Britanniae* chronicled the lives of legendary kings of the Britons in a narrative spanning 2000 years , beginning with the Trojans founding the ancient British nation and continuing until the Anglo @-@ Saxon invasion of Britain in the 7th century forced the Celtic Britons to the west , i.e. Wales and Cornwall . This legendary Celtic history of Great Britain is known as the Matter of Britain . The Matter of Britain , a national myth , was retold or reinterpreted in works by Gerald of Wales , a Cambro @-@ Norman chronicler who in the 12th and 13th centuries used the term British to refer to the people later known as the Welsh .

= = History = =

= = = Ancestral roots = = =

The indigenous people of the British Isles have a combination of Celtic , Norse , Anglo @-@ Saxon and Norman ancestry . Modern studies using DNA analysis , popularised by the geneticist Stephen Oppenheimer and others , increasingly suggest that three @-@ quarters of Britons share a common ancestry with the hunter @-@ gatherers who settled in Atlantic Europe during the Paleolithic era , " after the melting of the ice caps but before the land broke away from the mainland and divided into islands " .

Despite the separation of the British Isles from continental Europe following the last glacial period , the genetic record indicates that the British and Irish broadly share their closest common ancestry with the Basque people , who live in the Basque Country near the Pyrenees . Oppenheimer continues that the majority of the people of the British Isles share genetic commonalities with the Basques , ranging from highs of 90 % in Wales to lows of 66 % in East Anglia .

The genetic difference between western Britain and the East of England is thought to originate from two divergent prehistoric routes of immigration ? one up the Atlantic coast , the other from continental Europe . Major immigrant settlement of the British Isles occurred during the Neolithic period , interpreted by Bryan Sykes ? professor of human genetics at the University of Oxford ? as the arrival of the Celts from the Iberian Peninsula , and the origin of Britain 's and Ireland 's Celtic tribes .

Oppenheimer 's opinion is that " .. by far the majority of male gene types in the British Isles derive from Iberia ( modern Spain and Portugal ) , ranging from a low of 59 % in Fakenham , Norfolk to highs of 96 % in Llangefnï , north Wales " . The National Museum Wales states that " it is possible that future genetic studies of ancient and modern human DNA may help to inform our understanding of the subject " but " early studies have , so far , tended to produce implausible conclusions from very small numbers of people and using outdated assumptions about linguistics and archaeology . "

Between the 8th and 11th centuries , " three major cultural divisions " had emerged in Great Britain : the English , the Scots and the Welsh . The English had been unified under a single nation state in 937 by King Athelstan of Wessex after the Battle of Brunanburh . Before then , the English ( known then in Old English as the Anglecynn ) were under the governance of independent Anglo @-@ Saxon petty kingdoms which gradually coalesced into a Heptarchy of seven powerful states , the most powerful of which were Mercia and Wessex . Scottish historian and archaeologist Neil Oliver said that the Battle of Brunanburh would " define the shape of Britain into the modern era " , it was a " showdown for two very different ethnic identities ? a Norse Celtic alliance versus Anglo Saxon . It aimed to settle once and for all whether Britain would be controlled by a single imperial power or remain several separate independent kingdoms , a split in perceptions which is still very much with us today " . However , historian Simon Schama suggested that it was Edward I of England who was solely " responsible for provoking the peoples of Britain into an awareness of their nationhood " in the 13th century . Scottish national identity , " a complex amalgam " of Gael , Pict , Norsemen and Anglo @-@ Norman , was not finally forged until the Wars of Scottish Independence against the

Kingdom of England in the late 13th and early 14th centuries .

Though Wales was conquered by England , and its legal system replaced by that of the Kingdom of England under the Laws in Wales Acts 1535 ? 1542 , the Welsh endured as a nation distinct from the English . Later , with both an English Reformation and a Scottish Reformation , Edward VI of England , under the counsel of Edward Seymour , 1st Duke of Somerset , advocated a union with the Kingdom of Scotland , joining England , Wales , and Scotland in a united Protestant Great Britain . The Duke of Somerset supported the unification of the English , Welsh and Scots under the " indifferent old name of Britons " on the basis that their monarchies " both derived from a Pre @-@ Roman British monarchy " .

Following the death of Elizabeth I of England in 1603 , the throne of England was inherited by James VI , King of Scots , so that the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland were united in a personal union under James VI of Scotland and I of England , an event referred to as the Union of the Crowns . King James advocated full political union between England and Scotland , and on 20 October 1604 proclaimed his assumption of the style " King of Great Britain " , though this title was rejected by both the Parliament of England and the Parliament of Scotland , and so had no basis in either English law or Scots law .

= = = Union and the development of Britishness = = =

Despite centuries of military and religious conflict , the Kingdoms of England and Scotland had been " drawing increasingly together " since the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century and the Union of the Crowns in 1603 . A broadly shared language , island , monarch , religion and Bible ( the Authorized King James Version ) further contributed to a growing cultural alliance between the two sovereign realms and their peoples . The Glorious Revolution of 1688 resulted in a pair of Acts of the English and Scottish legislatures ? the Bill of Rights 1689 and Claim of Right Act 1689 respectively ? which ensured that the shared constitutional monarchy of England and Scotland was held only by Protestants . Despite this , although popular with the monarchy and much of the aristocracy , attempts to unite the two states by Acts of Parliament in 1606 , 1667 , and 1689 were unsuccessful ; increased political management of Scottish affairs from England had led to " criticism " , and strained Anglo @-@ Scottish relations .

While English maritime explorations during the Age of Discovery gave new @-@ found imperial power and wealth to the English and Welsh at the end of the 17th century , Scotland suffered from a long @-@ standing weak economy . In response , the Scottish kingdom , in opposition to William II of Scotland ( III of England ) , commenced the Darien Scheme , an attempt to establish a Scottish imperial outlet ? the colony of New Caledonia ? on the isthmus of Panama . However , through a combination of disease , Spanish hostility , Scottish mismanagement and opposition to the scheme by the East India Company and the English government ( who did not want to provoke the Spanish into war ) this imperial venture ended in " catastrophic failure " with an estimated " 25 % of Scotland 's total liquid capital " lost .

The events of the Darien Scheme , and the passing by the English Parliament of the Act of Settlement 1701 asserting the right to choose the order of succession for English , Scottish and Irish thrones , escalated political hostilities between England and Scotland , and neutralised calls for a united British people . The Parliament of Scotland responded by passing the Act of Security 1704 , allowing it to appoint a different monarch to succeed to the Scottish crown from that of England , if it so wished . The English political perspective was that the appointment of a Jacobite monarchy in Scotland opened up the possibility of a Franco @-@ Scottish military conquest of England during the Second Hundred Years ' War and War of the Spanish Succession . The Parliament of England passed the Alien Act 1705 , which provided that Scottish nationals in England were to be treated as aliens and estates held by Scots would be treated as alien property , whilst also restricting the import of Scottish products into England and its colonies ( about half of Scotland 's trade ) . However , the Act contained a provision that it would be suspended if the Parliament of Scotland entered into negotiations regarding the creation of a unified Parliament of Great Britain , which in turn would refund Scottish financial losses on the Darien Scheme .

= = = Union of Scotland and England = = =

Despite opposition from much of the Scottish and English populations , a Treaty of Union was agreed in 1706 and was then ratified by the parliaments of both countries with the passing of the Acts of Union 1707 . With effect from 1 May 1707 , this created a new sovereign state called the " Kingdom of Great Britain " . This kingdom " began as a hostile merger " , but led to a " full partnership in the most powerful going concern in the world " ; historian Simon Schama stated that " it was one of the most astonishing transformations in European history " .

After 1707 , a British national identity began to develop , though it was initially resisted , particularly by the English . The peoples of Great Britain had by the 1750s begun to assume a " layered identity " : to think of themselves as simultaneously British and also Scottish , English , or Welsh .

The terms North Briton and South Briton were devised for the Scots and the English respectively , with the former gaining some preference in Scotland , particularly by the economists and philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment . Indeed , it was the " Scots [ who ] played key roles in shaping the contours of British identity " ; " their scepticism about the Union allowed the Scots the space and time in which to dominate the construction of Britishness in its early crucial years " , drawing upon the notion of a shared " spirit of liberty common to both Saxon and Celt ... against the usurpation of the Church of Rome " . James Thomson was a poet and playwright born to a Church of Scotland minister in the Scottish Lowlands in 1700 who was interested in forging a common British culture and national identity in this way . In collaboration with Thomas Arne , they wrote *Alfred* , an opera about Alfred the Great 's victory against the Vikings performed to Frederick , Prince of Wales in 1740 to commemorate the accession of George I and the birthday of Princess Augusta . " *Rule , Britannia !* " was the climactic piece of the opera and quickly became a " jingoistic " British patriotic song celebrating " Britain 's supremacy offshore " . An island country with a series of victories for the Royal Navy associated empire and naval warfare " inextricably with ideals of Britishness and Britain 's place in the world " .

Britannia , the new national personification of Great Britain , was established in the 1750s as a representation of " nation and empire rather than any single national hero " . On Britannia and British identity , historian Peter Borsay wrote :

Up until 1797 Britannia was conventionally depicted holding a spear , but as a consequence of the increasingly prominent role of the Royal Navy in the war against the French , and of several spectacular victories , the spear was replaced by a trident ... The navy had come to be seen ... as the very bulwark of British liberty and the essence of what it was to be British .

From the Union of 1707 through to the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 , Great Britain was " involved in successive , very dangerous wars with Catholic France " , but which " all brought enough military and naval victories ... to flatter British pride " . As the Napoleonic Wars with the First French Empire advanced , " the English and Scottish learned to define themselves as similar primarily by virtue of not being French or Catholic " . In combination with sea power and empire , the notion of Britishness became more " closely bound up with Protestantism " , a cultural commonality through which the English , Scots and Welsh became " fused together , and remain [ ed ] so , despite their many cultural divergences " .

The neo @-@ classical monuments that proliferated at the end of the 18th century and the start of the 19th , such as *The Kymin* at Monmouth , were attempts to meld the concepts of Britishness with the Greco @-@ Roman empires of classical antiquity . The new and expanding British Empire provided " unprecedented opportunities for upward mobility and the accumulations of wealth " , and so the " Scottish , Welsh and Irish populations were prepared to suppress nationalist issues on pragmatic grounds " . The British Empire was " crucial to the idea of a British identity and to the self @-@ image of Britishness " . Indeed , the Scottish welcomed Britishness during the 19th century " for it offered a context within which they could hold on to their own identity whilst participating in , and benefiting from , the expansion of the [ British ] Empire " . Similarly , the " new emphasis of Britishness was broadly welcomed by the Welsh who considered themselves to be the lineal descendants of the ancient Britons ? a word that was still used to refer exclusively to the Welsh " .

For the English , however , by the Victorian era their enthusiastic adoption of Britishness had meant that , for them , Britishness " meant the same as ' Englishness ' " , so much so that " Englishness and Britishness " and " ' England ' and ' Britain ' were used interchangeably in a variety of contexts " . Britishness came to borrow heavily from English political history because England had " always been the dominant component of the British Isles in terms of size , population and power " ; Magna Carta , common law and hostility to continental Europe were English factors that influenced British sensibilities .

= = = Union with Ireland = = =

The political union of the predominantly Catholic Kingdom of Ireland with Great Britain in 1800 , coupled with the outbreak of peace with France in the early 19th century , challenged the previous century 's concept of militant Protestant Britishness . The new , expanded United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland meant that the state had to re @-@ evaluate its position on the civil rights of Catholics , and extend its definition of Britishness to the Irish people . Like the terms that had been invented at the time of the Acts of Union 1707 , " West Briton " was introduced for the Irish after 1800 . In 1832 Daniel O 'Connell , an Irish politician who campaigned for Catholic Emancipation , stated in Britain 's House of Commons :

The people of Ireland are ready to become a portion of the British Empire , provided they be made so in reality and not in name alone ; they are ready to become a kind of West Briton if made so in benefits and justice ; but if not , we are Irishmen again .

Ireland , from 1801 to 1923 , was marked by a succession of economic and political mismanagement and neglect , which marginalised the Irish , and advanced Irish nationalism . In the forty years that followed the Union , successive British governments grappled with the problems of governing a country which had , as Benjamin Disraeli put it in 1844 , " a starving population , an absentee aristocracy , and an alien Church , and in addition the weakest executive in the world " . Although the vast majority of Unionists in Ireland proclaimed themselves " simultaneously Irish and British " , even for them there was a strain upon the adoption of Britishness after the Great Famine .

War continued to be a unifying factor for the people of Great Britain : British jingoism re @-@ emerged during the Boer Wars in southern Africa . The experience of military , political and economic power from the rise of the British Empire led to a very specific drive in artistic technique , taste and sensibility for Britishness . In 1887 , Frederic Harrison wrote :

Morally , we Britons plant the British flag on every peak and pass ; and wherever the Union Jack floats there we place the cardinal British institutions ? tea , tubs , sanitary appliances , lawn tennis , and churches .

The Catholic Relief Act 1829 reflected a " marked change in attitudes " in Great Britain towards Catholics and Catholicism . A " significant " example of this was the collaboration between Augustus Welby Pugin , an " ardent Roman Catholic " and son of a Frenchman , and Sir Charles Barry , " a confirmed Protestant " , in redesigning the Palace of Westminster ? " the building that most enshrines ... Britain 's national and imperial pre @-@ tensions " . Protestantism gave way to imperialism as the leading element of British national identity during the Victorian and Edwardian eras , and as such , a series of royal , imperial and national celebrations were introduced to the British people to assert imperial British culture and give themselves a sense of uniqueness , superiority and national consciousness . Empire Day and jubilees of Queen Victoria were introduced to the British middle class , but quickly " merged into a national ' tradition ' " .

= = = Modern period = = =

The First World War " reinforced the sense of Britishness " and patriotism in the early 20th century . Through war service ( including conscription in Great Britain ) , " the English , Welsh , Scots and Irish fought as British " . The aftermath of the war institutionalised British national commemoration through Remembrance Sunday and the Poppy Appeal . The Second World War had a similar unifying effect upon the British people , however , its outcome was to recondition Britishness on a

basis of democratic values and its marked contrast to Europeanism . Notions that the British " constituted an Island race , and that it stood for democracy were reinforced during the war and they were circulated in the country through Winston Churchill 's speeches , history books and newspapers " .

At its international zenith , " Britishness joined peoples around the world in shared traditions and common loyalties that were strenuously maintained " . But following the two world wars , the British Empire experienced rapid decolonisation . The secession of the Irish Free State from the United Kingdom meant that Britishness had lost " its Irish dimension " in 1922 , and the shrinking empire supplanted by independence movements dwindled the appeal of British identity in the Commonwealth of Nations during the mid @-@ 20th century .

Since the British Nationality Act 1948 and the subsequent mass immigration to the United Kingdom from the Commonwealth and elsewhere in the world , " the expression and experience of cultural life in Britain has become fragmented and reshaped by the influences of gender , ethnicity , class and region " . Furthermore , the United Kingdom 's membership of the European Economic Community in 1973 eroded the concept of Britishness as distinct from continental Europe . As such , since the 1970s " there has been a sense of crisis about what it has meant to be British " , exacerbated by growing demands for greater political autonomy for Northern Ireland , Scotland , and Wales .

The late 20th century saw major changes to the politics of the United Kingdom with the establishment of devolved national administrations for Northern Ireland , Scotland , and Wales following pre @-@ legislative referendums . Calls for greater autonomy for the four countries of the United Kingdom had existed since their original union with each other , but gathered pace in the 1960s and 1970s . Devolution has led to " increasingly assertive Scottish , Welsh and Irish national identities " , resulting in more diverse cultural expressions of Britishness , or else its outright rejection : Gwynfor Evans , a Welsh nationalist politician active in the late 20th century , rebuffed Britishness as " a political synonym for Englishness which extends English culture over the Scots , Welsh and the Irish " .

In 2004 Sir Bernard Crick , political theorist and democratic socialist tasked with developing the life in the United Kingdom test said :

Britishness , to me , is an overarching political and legal concept : it signifies allegiance to the laws , government and broad moral and political concepts ? like tolerance and freedom of expression ? that hold the United Kingdom together .

Gordon Brown , Prime Minister of the United Kingdom , initiated a debate on British identity in 2006 . Brown 's speech to the Fabian Society 's Britishness Conference proposed that British values demand a new constitutional settlement and symbols to represent a modern patriotism , including a new youth community service scheme and a British Day to celebrate . One of the central issues identified at the Fabian Society conference was how the English identity fits within the framework of a devolved United Kingdom . An expression of Her Majesty 's Government 's initiative to promote Britishness was the inaugural Veterans ' Day which was first held on 27 June 2006 . As well as celebrating the achievements of armed forces veterans , Brown 's speech at the first event for the celebration said :

Scots and people from the rest of the UK share the purpose ? that Britain has something to say to the rest of the world about the values of freedom , democracy and the dignity of the people that you stand up for . So at a time when people can talk about football and devolution and money , it is important that we also remember the values that we share in common .

= = Geographic distribution = =

Britons - people with British citizenship or of British descent - have a significant presence in a number of countries other than the United Kingdom , and in particular in those with historic connections to the British Empire . After the Age of Discovery the British were one of the earliest and largest communities to emigrate out of Europe , and the British Empire 's expansion during the first half of the 19th century triggered an " extraordinary dispersion of the British people " , resulting in particular concentrations " in Australasia and North America " .

The British Empire was " built on waves of migration overseas by British people " , who left the United Kingdom and " reached across the globe and permanently affected population structures in three continents " . As a result of the British colonisation of the Americas , what became the United States was " easily the greatest single destination of emigrant British " , but in Australia the British experienced a birth rate higher than " anything seen before " resulting in the displacement of indigenous Australians .

In colonies such as Southern Rhodesia , British East Africa and Cape Colony , permanently resident British communities were established and whilst never more than a numerical minority these Britons " exercised a dominant influence " upon the culture and politics of those lands . In Australia , Canada and New Zealand " people of British origin came to constitute the majority of the population " contributing to these states becoming integral to the Anglosphere .

The United Kingdom Census 1861 estimated the size of the overseas British to be around 2 @. @ 5 million , but concluded that most of these were " not conventional settlers " but rather " travellers , merchants , professionals , and military personnel " . By 1890 , there were over 1 @. @ 5 million further UK @- @ born people living in Australia , Canada , New Zealand and South Africa . A 2006 publication from the Institute for Public Policy Research estimated 5 @. @ 6 million Britons lived outside of the United Kingdom .

= = = Australia = = =

From the beginning of Australia 's colonial period until after the Second World War , people from the United Kingdom made up a large majority of people coming to Australia , meaning that many people born in Australia can trace their origins to Britain . The colony of New South Wales , founded on 26 January 1788 , was part of the eastern half of Australia claimed by the Kingdom of Great Britain in 1770 , and initially settled by Britons through penal transportation . Together with another five largely self @- @ governing Crown Colonies , the federation of Australia was achieved on 1 January 1901 .

Its history of British dominance meant that Australia was " grounded in British culture and political traditions that had been transported to the Australian colonies in the nineteenth century and become part of colonial culture and politics " . Australia maintains the Westminster system of Parliamentary Government and Elizabeth II as Queen of Australia . Until 1987 , the national status of Australian citizens was formally described as " British Subject : Citizen of Australia " . Britons continue to make up a substantial proportion of immigrants .

= = = British overseas territories = = =

The people of the British overseas territories are British by citizenship , via origins or naturalisation . Along with aspects of common British identity , each of them has their own distinct identity shaped in the respective particular circumstances of political , economic , ethnic , social and cultural history . For instance , in the case of the Falkland Islanders , Lewis Clifton the Speaker of the Legislative Council of the Falkland Islands , explains :

British cultural , economic , social , political and educational values create a unique British @- @ like , Falkland Islands . Yet Islanders feel distinctly different from their fellow citizens who reside in the United Kingdom . This might have something to do with geographical isolation or with living on a smaller island ? perhaps akin to those Britons not feeling European .

In contrast , for the majority of the Gibraltarians , who live in Gibraltar , there is an " insistence on their Britishness " which " carries excessive loyalty " to Britain . The sovereignty of Gibraltar has been a point of contention in Spain ? United Kingdom relations , but an overwhelming number of Gibraltarians embrace Britishness with strong conviction , in direct opposition to Spanish territorial claims .

= = = Canada = = =

Canada traces its statehood to the French , English and Scottish expeditions of North America from

the late 15th century . France ceded nearly all of New France in 1763 after the Seven Years ' War , and so after the United States Declaration of Independence in 1776 , Quebec and Nova Scotia formed " the nucleus of the colonies that constituted Britain 's remaining stake on the North American continent " . British North America attracted the United Empire Loyalists , Britons who migrated out of what they considered the " rebellious " United States , increasing the size of British communities in what was to become Canada .

In 1867 there was a union of three colonies with British North America which together formed the Canadian Confederation , a federal dominion . This began an accretion of additional provinces and territories and a process of increasing autonomy from the United Kingdom , highlighted by the Statute of Westminster 1931 and culminating in the Canada Act 1982 , which severed the vestiges of legal dependence on the parliament of the United Kingdom . Nevertheless , it is recognised that there is a " continuing importance of Canada 's long and close relationship with Britain " ; large parts of Canada 's modern population claim " British origins " and the cultural impact of the British upon Canada 's institutions is profound .

It was not until 1977 that the phrase " A Canadian citizen is a British subject " ceased to be used in Canadian passports . The politics of Canada are strongly influenced by British political culture . Although significant modifications have been made , Canada is governed by a democratic parliamentary framework comparable to the Westminster system , and retains Elizabeth II as The Queen of Canada and Head of State . English is an official language used in Canada .

= = = Chile = = =

Chile , facing the Pacific Ocean , has a large British presence . Over 50 000 British immigrants settled in Chile from 1840 to 1914 . A significant number of them settled in Magallanes Province , especially in the city of Punta Arenas when it flourished as a major global seaport for ships crossing between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans through the Strait of Magellan . Around 32 000 English settled in Valparaíso , influencing the port city to the extent of making it virtually a British colony during the last decades of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century . However , the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 and the outbreak of the First World War drove many of them away from the city or back to Europe .

In Valparaíso , they created their largest and most important colony , bringing with them neighbourhoods of British character , schools , social clubs , sports clubs , business organisations and periodicals . Even today their influence is apparent in specific areas , such as the banks and the navy , as well as in certain social activities , such as football , horse racing , and the custom of drinking tea .

During the movement for independence ( 1818 ) , it was mainly the British who formed the Chilean Navy , under the command of Lord Cochrane .

British investment helped Chile become prosperous and British seamen helped the Chilean navy become a strong force in the South Pacific . Chile won two wars , the first against the Peru - Bolivian Confederation and the second , the War of the Pacific , in 1878 - 79 , against an alliance between Peru and Bolivia . The liberal - socialist " Revolution of 1891 " introduced political reforms modelled on British parliamentary practice and lawmaking .

British immigrants were also important in the northern zone of the country during the saltpetre boom , in the ports of Iquique and Pisagua . The " King of Saltpetre " , John Thomas North , was the principal tycoon of nitrate mining . The British legacy is reflected in the streets of the historic district of the city of Iquique , with the foundation of various institutions , such as the Club Hípico ( Racing Club ) . Nevertheless , the British active presence came to an end with the saltpetre crisis during the 1930s .

Some Scots settled in the country 's more temperate regions , where the climate and the forested landscape with glaciers and islands may have reminded them of their homeland ( the Highlands and Northern Scotland ) while English and Welsh made up the rest . The Irish immigrants , who were frequently confused with the British , arrived as merchants , tradesmen and sailors , settling along with the British in the main trading cities and ports .



An important contingent of British ( principally Welsh ) immigrants arrived between 1914 and 1950 , settling in the present @-@ day region of Magallanes . British families were established in other areas of the country , such as Santiago , Coquimbo , the Araucanía , and Chiloé .

The cultural legacy of the British in Chile is notable and has spread beyond the British Chilean community into society at large . Customs taken from the British include afternoon tea ( called onces by Chileans ) , football , rugby union and horse racing . Another legacy is the widespread use of British personal names by Chileans .

Chile has the largest population of descendants of British settlers in Latin America . Over 700 @,@ 000 Chileans may have British ( English , Scottish and Welsh ) origin , amounting to 4 @.@ 5 % of Chile 's population .

= = = New Zealand = = =

A long @-@ term result of James Cook 's voyage of 1768 ? 71 , a significant number of New Zealanders are of British descent , for whom a sense of Britishness has contributed to their identity . As late as the 1950s , it was common for British New Zealanders to refer to themselves as British , such as when Prime Minister Keith Holyoake described Sir Edmund Hillary 's successful ascent of Mount Everest as putting " the British race and New Zealand on top of the world " . New Zealand passports described nationals as " British Subject : Citizen of New Zealand " until 1974 , when this was changed to " New Zealand citizen " .

In an interview with the New Zealand Listener in 2006 , Don Brash , the then Leader of the Opposition , said :

British immigrants fit in here very well . My own ancestry is all British . New Zealand values are British values , derived from centuries of struggle since Magna Carta . Those things make New Zealand the society it is .

The politics of New Zealand are strongly influenced by British political culture . Although significant modifications have been made , New Zealand is governed by a democratic parliamentary framework comparable to the Westminster system , and retains Elizabeth II as the head of the monarchy of New Zealand . English is the dominant official language used in New Zealand .

= = = Hong Kong = = =

British nationality law as it pertains to Hong Kong has been unusual ever since Hong Kong became a British colony in 1842 . From its beginning as a sparsely populated trading port to its modern role as a cosmopolitan international financial centre of over seven million people , the territory has attracted refugees , immigrants and expatriates alike searching for a new life . Citizenship matters were complicated by the fact that British nationality law treated those born in Hong Kong as British subjects ( although they did not enjoy full rights and citizenship ) , while the People 's Republic of China ( PRC ) did not recognise Hong Kong Chinese as such . The main reason for this was that recognising these people as British was seen as a tacit acceptance of a series of historical treaties that the PRC labelled as " unequal " , including the ones which ceded Hong Kong Island , the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories to Britain . The British government , however , recognising the unique political situation of Hong Kong , granted 3 @.@ 4 million Hong Kongers a new type of nationality known as British National ( Overseas ) , which is established in accordance with the Hong Kong Act 1985 . Among those 3 @.@ 4 million people , there are many British Nationals ( Overseas ) who are eligible for full British citizenship . Both British Nationals ( Overseas ) and British citizens are British nationals and Commonwealth citizens according to the British Nationality Law , which enables them to various rights in the United Kingdom and the European Union .

= = = South Africa = = =

The British arrived in the area which would become the modern @-@ day South Africa during the

early 18th century , yet substantial settlement only started end of the 18th century , in the Cape of Good Hope ; the British first explored the area for conquests for or related to the Slave Trade . In the late 19th century , the discovery of gold and diamonds further encouraged colonisation of South Africa by the British , and the population of the British @-@ South Africans rose substantially , although there was fierce rivalry between the British and Afrikaners ( descendants of Dutch colonists ) in the period known as the Boer Wars . When apartheid first started most British @-@ South Africans were mostly keen on keeping and even strengthening its ties with the United Kingdom . The latest census in South Africa showed that there are almost 2 million British @-@ South Africans ; they make up about 40 % of the total White South African demographic , and the greatest white British ancestry populations in South Africa are in the KwaZulu @-@ Natal province and in cities such as Johannesburg and Cape Town .

= = = Ireland = = =

Plantations of Ireland introduced large numbers of people from Great Britain to Ireland throughout the Middle Ages and early modern period . The resulting Protestant Ascendancy , the aristocratic class of the Lordship of Ireland , broadly identified themselves as Anglo @-@ Irish . In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries , Protestant British settlers subjugated Catholic , Gaelic inhabitants in the north of Ireland during the Plantation of Ulster and the Williamite War in Ireland ; it was " an explicit attempt to control Ireland strategically by introducing ethnic and religious elements loyal to the British interest in Ireland " .

The Ulster Scots people are an ethnic group of British origin in Ireland , broadly descended from Lowland Scots who settled in large numbers in the Province of Ulster during the planned process of colonisations of Ireland which took place in the reign of James VI of Scotland and I of England . Together with English and Welsh settlers , these Scots introduced Protestantism ( particularly the Presbyterianism of the Church of Scotland ) and the Ulster Scots and English languages to , mainly , northeastern Ireland . With the partition of Ireland and independence for what is now the Republic of Ireland some of these people found themselves no longer living within the United Kingdom .

Northern Ireland itself was , for many years , the site of a violent and bitter ethno @-@ sectarian conflict ? The Troubles ? between those claiming to represent Irish nationalism , who are predominantly Roman Catholic , and those claiming to represent British unionism , who are predominantly Protestant . Unionists want Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom , while nationalists desire a united Ireland .

Since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 , most of the paramilitary groups involved in the Troubles have ceased their armed campaigns , and constitutionally , the people of Northern Ireland have been recognised as " all persons born in Northern Ireland and having , at the time of their birth , at least one parent who is a British citizen , an Irish citizen or is otherwise entitled to reside in Northern Ireland without any restriction on their period of residence " . The Good Friday Agreement guarantees the " recognition of the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British , or both , as they may so choose " .

= = = United States = = =

An English presence in North America began with the Roanoke Colony and Colony of Virginia in the late @-@ 16th century , but the first successful English settlement was established in 1607 , on the James River at Jamestown . By the 1610s an estimated 1 @, @ 300 English people had travelled to North America , the " first of many millions from the British Isles " . In 1620 the Pilgrims established the English imperial venture of Plymouth Colony , beginning " a remarkable acceleration of permanent emigration from England " with over 60 % of trans @-@ Atlantic English migrants settling in the New England Colonies . During the 17th century an estimated 350 @, @ 000 English and Welsh migrants arrived in North America , which in the century after the Acts of Union 1707 was surpassed in rate and number by Scottish and Irish migrants .

The British policy of salutary neglect for its North American colonies intended to minimise trade

restrictions as a way of ensuring they stayed loyal to British interests . This permitted the development of the American Dream , a cultural spirit distinct from that of its European founders . The Thirteen Colonies of British America began an armed rebellion against British rule in 1775 when they rejected the right of the Parliament of Great Britain to govern them without representation ; they proclaimed their independence in 1776 , and constituted the first thirteen states of the United States of America , which became a sovereign state in 1781 with the ratification of the Articles of Confederation . The 1783 Treaty of Paris represented Great Britain 's formal acknowledgement of the United States ' sovereignty at the end of the American Revolutionary War .

Nevertheless , longstanding cultural and historical ties have , in more modern times , resulted in the Special Relationship , the historically close political , diplomatic , and military co -operation between the United Kingdom and United States . Linda Colley , a professor of history at Princeton University and specialist in Britishness , suggested that because of their colonial influence on the United States , the British find Americans a " mysterious and paradoxical people , physically distant but culturally close , engagingly similar yet irritatingly different " .

Today , 838 @, @ 000 people in the United States identified themselves as born in Britain ..

= = Culture = =

Result from the expansion of the British Empire , British cultural influence can be observed in the language and culture of a geographically wide assortment of countries such as Canada , Australia , New Zealand , South Africa , India , Pakistan , the United States , and the British overseas territories . These states are sometimes collectively known as the Anglosphere . As well as the British influence on its empire , the empire also influenced British culture , particularly British cuisine . Innovations and movements within the wider @-@ culture of Europe have also changed the United Kingdom ; Humanism , Protestantism , and representative democracy have developed from broader Western culture .

As a result of the history of the formation of the United Kingdom , the cultures of England , Scotland , Wales , and Northern Ireland are diverse and have varying degrees of overlap and distinctiveness .

= = = Cuisine = = =

Historically , British cuisine has meant " unfussy dishes made with quality local ingredients , matched with simple sauces to accentuate flavour , rather than disguise it " . It has been " vilified as unimaginative and heavy " , and traditionally been limited in its international recognition to the full breakfast and the Christmas dinner . This is despite British cuisine having absorbed the culinary influences of those who have settled in Britain , resulting in hybrid dishes such as the British Asian Chicken tikka masala , hailed by some as " Britain 's true national dish " .

Celtic agriculture and animal breeding produced a wide variety of foodstuffs for Celts and Britons . The Anglo @-@ Saxons developed meat and savoury herb stewing techniques before the practice became common in Europe . The Norman conquest of England introduced exotic spices into Britain in the Middle Ages . The British Empire facilitated a knowledge of India 's food tradition of " strong , penetrating spices and herbs " . Food rationing policies , imposed by the British government during wartime periods of the 20th century , are said to have been the stimulus for British cuisine 's poor international reputation .

British dishes include fish and chips , the Sunday roast , and bangers and mash . British cuisine has several national and regional varieties , including English , Scottish and Welsh cuisine , each of which has developed its own regional or local dishes , many of which are geographically indicated foods such as Cheddar cheese , Cheshire cheese , the Yorkshire pudding , Arbroath Smokie , Cornish pasty and Welsh cakes .

The British are the second largest per capita tea consumers in the world , consuming an average of 2 @. @ 1 kilograms ( 4 @. @ 6 lb ) per person each year . British tea culture dates back to the 19th century , when India was part of the British Empire and British interests controlled tea production in

the subcontinent .

### == Languages ==

There is no single British language , though English is by far the main language spoken by British citizens , being spoken monolingually by more than 70 % of the UK population . English is therefore the de facto official language of the United Kingdom . However , under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages , the Welsh , Scottish Gaelic , Cornish , Irish , Ulster Scots and Scots ( or Lowland Scots ) languages are officially recognised as Regional or Minority languages by the UK Government . As indigenous languages which continue to be spoken as a first language by native inhabitants , Welsh and Scottish Gaelic have a different legal status from other minority languages . In some parts of the UK , some of these languages are commonly spoken as a first language ; in wider areas , their use in a bilingual context is sometimes supported and / or promoted by central and / or local government policy . For naturalisation purposes , a competence standard of English , Scottish Gaelic or Welsh is required to pass the life in the United Kingdom test . However , English is used routinely , and although considered culturally important , Scottish Gaelic and Welsh are much less used .

Throughout the United Kingdom there are distinctive spoken expressions and regional accents of English , which are seen to be symptomatic of a locality 's culture and identity . An awareness and knowledge of accents in the United Kingdom can " place , within a few miles , the locality in which a man or woman has grown up " .

### == Literature ==

British literature is " one of the leading literatures in the world " . The overwhelming part is written in the English language , but there are also pieces of literature written in Scots , Scottish Gaelic and Welsh .

Britain has a long history of famous and influential authors . It boasts some of the oldest pieces of literature in the Western world , such as the epic poem Beowulf , one of the oldest surviving written work in the English language .

Famous authors include some of the world 's most studied and praised writers . William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe defined England 's Elizabethan period . The British Romantic movement was one of the strongest and most recognisable in Europe . The poets William Blake , Wordsworth and Coleridge were amongst the pioneers of Romanticism in literature . Other Romantic writers that followed these figure further enhanced the profile of Romanticism in Europe , such as John Keats , Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron . Later periods like the Victorian Era saw a further flourishing of British writing , including Charles Dickens and William Thackeray .

Women 's literature in Britain has had a long and often troubled history , with many female writers producing work under a pen name , such as George Eliot . Other great female novelists that contributed to world literature were the Brontë sisters , Emily , Charlotte and Anne .

Non @-@ fiction has also played an important role in the history of British letters , with the first dictionary of the English language being produced and compiled by Samuel Johnson , a graduate of Oxford University and a London resident .

### == Media and music ==

Although cinema , theatre , dance and live music are popular , the favourite pastime of the British is watching television . Public broadcast television in the United Kingdom began in 1936 , with the launch of the BBC Television Service ( now BBC One ) . In the United Kingdom and the Crown dependencies , one must have a television licence to legally receive any broadcast television service , from any source . This includes the commercial channels , cable and satellite transmissions , and the Internet . Revenue generated from the television licence is used to provide radio , television and Internet content for the British Broadcasting Corporation , and Welsh language

television programmes for S4C . The BBC , the common abbreviation of the British Broadcasting Corporation , is the world 's largest broadcaster . Unlike other broadcasters in the UK , it is a public service based , quasi @-@ autonomous , statutory corporation run by the BBC Trust . Free @-@ to @-@ air terrestrial television channels available on a national basis are BBC One , BBC Two , ITV , Channel 4 ( S4C in Wales ) , and Five .

100 Greatest British Television Programmes was a list compiled by the British Film Institute in 2000 , chosen by a poll of industry professionals , to determine what were the greatest British television programmes of any genre ever to have been screened . Topping the list was Fawlty Towers , a British sitcom set in a fictional Torquay hotel starring John Cleese .

" British musical tradition is essentially vocal " , dominated by the music of England and Germanic culture , most greatly influenced by hymns and Anglican church music . However , the specific , traditional music of Wales and music of Scotland is distinct , and of the Celtic musical tradition . In the United Kingdom , more people attend live music performances than football matches . British rock was born in the mid @-@ 20th century out of the influence of rock and roll and rhythm and blues from the United States . Major early exports were The Beatles , The Rolling Stones , The Who and The Kinks . Together with other bands from the United Kingdom , these constituted the British Invasion , a popularisation of British pop and rock music in the United States . Into the 1970s heavy metal , new wave , and 2 tone . Britpop is a subgenre of alternative rock that emerged from the British independent music scene of the early 1990s and was characterised by bands reviving British guitar pop music of the 1960s and 1970s . Leading exponents of Britpop were Blur , Oasis and Pulp . Also popularised in the United Kingdom during the 1990s were several domestically produced varieties of electronic dance music ; acid house , UK hard house , jungle , UK garage which in turn have influenced grime and British hip hop in the 2000s . The BRIT Awards are the British Phonographic Industry 's annual awards for both international and British popular music .

= = = Religion = = =

Historically , Christianity " has been the most influential and important religion in Britain " , and it remains the declared faith of the majority of the British people . The influence of Christianity on British culture has been " widespread , extending beyond the spheres of prayer and worship . Churches and cathedrals make a significant contribution to the architectural landscape of the nation 's cities and towns " whilst " many schools and hospitals were founded by men and women who were strongly influenced by Christian motives " . Throughout the United Kingdom , Easter and Christmas , the " two most important events in the Christian calendar " , are recognised as public holidays .

Christianity remains the major religion of the population of the United Kingdom in the 21st century , followed by Islam , Hinduism , Sikhism and then Judaism in terms of numbers of adherents . The 2007 Tearfund Survey revealed 53 % identified themselves as Christian , which was similar to the 2004 British Social Attitudes Survey , and to the United Kingdom Census 2001 in which 71 @. @ 6 % said that Christianity was their religion , However , the Tearfund Survey showed only one in ten Britons attend church weekly . Secularism was advanced in Britain during the Age of Enlightenment , and modern British organisations such as the British Humanist Association and the National Secular Society offer the opportunity for their members to " debate and explore the moral and philosophical issues in a non @-@ religious setting " .

The Treaty of Union that led to the formation of the Kingdom of Great Britain ensured that there would be a Protestant succession as well as a link between church and state that still remains . The Church of England ( Anglican ) is legally recognised as the established church , and so retains representation in the Parliament of the United Kingdom through the Lords Spiritual , whilst the British monarch is a member of the church as well as its Supreme Governor . The Church of England also retains the right to draft legislative measures ( related to religious administration ) through the General Synod that can then be passed into law by Parliament . The Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales is the second largest Christian church with around five million members , mainly in England . There are also growing Orthodox , Evangelical and Pentecostal churches , with

Pentecostal churches in England now third after the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church in terms of church attendance . Other large Christian groups include Methodists and Baptists .

The Presbyterian Church of Scotland ( known informally as The Kirk ) , is recognised as the national church of Scotland and not subject to state control . The British monarch is an ordinary member and is required to swear an oath to " defend the security " of the church upon his or her accession . The Roman Catholic Church in Scotland is Scotland 's second largest Christian church , with followers representing a sixth of the population of Scotland . The Scottish Episcopal Church , which is part of the Anglican Communion , dates from the final establishment of Presbyterianism in Scotland in 1690 , when it split from the Church of Scotland over matters of theology and ritual . Further splits in the Church of Scotland , especially in the 19th century , led to the creation of other Presbyterian churches in Scotland , including the Free Church of Scotland . In the 1920s , the Church in Wales became independent from the Church of England and became ' disestablished ' but remains in the Anglican Communion . Methodism and other Protestant churches have had a major presence in Wales . The main religious groups in Northern Ireland are organised on an all @-@ Ireland basis . Though collectively Protestants constitute the overall majority , the Roman Catholic Church of Ireland is the largest single church . The Presbyterian Church in Ireland , closely linked to the Church of Scotland in terms of theology and history , is the second largest church followed by the Church of Ireland ( Anglican ) which was disestablished in the 19th century .

= = = Sport = = =

Sport is an important element of British culture , and is one of the most popular leisure activities of Britons . Within the United Kingdom , nearly half of all adults partake in one or more sporting activity each week . Some of the major sports in the United Kingdom " were invented by the British " , including football , rugby union , rugby league and cricket , and " exported various other games " including tennis , badminton , boxing , golf , snooker and squash .

In most sports , separate organisations , teams and clubs represent the individual countries of the United Kingdom at international level , though in some sports , like rugby union , an all @-@ Ireland team represents both Northern Ireland and the Republic , and the British and Irish Lions represent the isles as a whole . The UK is represented by a single team at the Olympic Games and at the 2012 Summer Olympics , the Great Britain team won 65 medals : 29 gold ( the most since the 1908 Summer Olympics ) , 17 silver and 19 bronze , ranking them 3rd . In total , sportsmen and women from the UK " hold over 50 world titles in a variety of sports , such as professional boxing , rowing , snooker , squash and motorcycle sports " .

A 2006 poll found that association football was the most popular sport in the UK . In England 320 football clubs are affiliated to The Football Association ( FA ) and more than 42 @,@ 000 clubs to regional or district associations . The FA , founded in 1863 , and the Football League , founded in 1888 , were both the first of their kind in the world . In Scotland there are 78 full and associate clubs and nearly 6 @,@ 000 registered clubs under the jurisdiction of the Scottish Football Association . Two Welsh clubs play in England 's Football League , one in the Premier league , and others at non @-@ league level , whilst the Welsh Football League contains 20 semi @-@ professional clubs . In Northern Ireland , 12 semi @-@ professional clubs play in the IFA Premiership , the second oldest league in the world .

Recreational fishing , particularly angling , is one of the most popular participation activities in the United Kingdom , with an estimated 3 ? 4 million anglers in the country . The most widely practised form of angling in England and Wales is for coarse fish while in Scotland angling is usually for salmon and trout .

= = = Visual art and architecture = = =

For centuries , artists and architects in Britain were overwhelmingly influenced by Western art history . Amongst the first visual artists credited for developing a distinctly British aesthetic and

artistic style is William Hogarth . The experience of military , political and economic power from the rise of the British Empire , led to a very specific drive in artistic technique , taste and sensibility in the United Kingdom . Britons used their art " to illustrate their knowledge and command of the natural world " , whilst the permanent settlers in British North America , Australasia , and South Africa " embarked upon a search for distinctive artistic expression appropriate to their sense of national identity " . The empire has been " at the centre , rather than in the margins , of the history of British art " , and imperial British visual arts have been fundamental to the construction , celebration and expression of Britishness .

British attitudes to modern art were " polarised " at the end of the 19th century . Modernist movements were both cherished and vilified by artists and critics ; Impressionism was initially regarded by " many conservative critics " as a " subversive foreign influence " , but became " fully assimilated " into British art during the early @-@ 20th century . Representational art was described by Herbert Read during the interwar period as " necessarily ... revolutionary " , and was studied and produced to such an extent that by the 1950s , Classicism was effectively void in British visual art . Post @-@ modern , contemporary British art , particularly that of the Young British Artists , has been pre @-@ occupied with postcolonialism , and " characterised by a fundamental concern with material culture ... perceived as a post @-@ imperial cultural anxiety " .

Architecture of the United Kingdom is diverse ; most influential developments have usually taken place in England , but Ireland , Scotland , and Wales have at various times played leading roles in architectural history . Although there are prehistoric and classical structures in the British Isles , British architecture effectively begins with the first Anglo @-@ Saxon Christian churches , built soon after Augustine of Canterbury arrived in Great Britain in 597 . Norman architecture was built on a vast scale from the 11th century onwards in the form of castles and churches to help impose Norman authority upon their dominion . English Gothic architecture , which flourished between 1180 until around 1520 , was initially imported from France , but quickly developed its own unique qualities . Secular medieval architecture throughout Britain has left a legacy of large stone castles , with the " finest examples " being found lining both sides of the Anglo @-@ Scottish border , dating from the Wars of Scottish Independence of the 14th century . The invention of gunpowder and canons made castles redundant , and the English Renaissance which followed facilitated the development of new artistic styles for domestic architecture : Tudor style , English Baroque , The Queen Anne Style and Palladian . Georgian and Neoclassical architecture advanced after the Scottish Enlightenment . Outwith the United Kingdom , the influence of British architecture is particularly strong in South India , the result of British rule in India in the 19th century . The Indian cities of Bangalore , Chennai , and Mumbai each have courts , hotels and train stations designed in British architectural styles of Gothic Revivalism and neoclassicism .

= = = Political culture = = =

British political culture is tied closely with its institutions and civics , and a " subtle fusion of new and old values " . The principle of constitutional monarchy , with its notions of stable parliamentary government and political liberalism , " have come to dominate British culture " . These views have been reinforced by Sir Bernard Crick who said :

To be British seems to us to mean that we respect the laws , the elected parliamentary and democratic political structures , traditional values of mutual tolerance , respect for equal rights and mutual concern ; that we give our allegiance to the state ( as commonly symbolised by the Crown ) in return for its protection .

British political institutions include the Westminster system , the Commonwealth of Nations and Privy Council of the United Kingdom . Although the Privy Council is primarily a British institution , officials from other Commonwealth realms are also appointed to the body . The most notable continuing instance is the Prime Minister of New Zealand , its senior politicians , Chief Justice and Court of Appeal judges are conventionally made Privy Counsellors , as the prime ministers and chief justices of Canada and Australia used to be . Prime Ministers of Commonwealth countries which retain the British monarch as their sovereign continue to be sworn as Privy Counsellors .

Universal suffrage for all males over 21 was granted in 1918 and for adult women in 1928 after the Suffragette movement . Politics in the United Kingdom is multi @-@ party , with three dominant political parties : the Conservative Party , the Labour Party and the Scottish National Party . The social structure of Britain , specifically social class , has " long been pre @-@ eminent among the factors used to explain party allegiance " , and still persists as " the dominant basis " of party political allegiance for Britons . The Conservative Party is descended from the historic Tory Party ( founded in England in 1678 ) , and is a centre @-@ right conservative political party , which traditionally draws support from the middle classes . The Labour Party ( founded by Scotsman Keir Hardie ) grew out of the trade union movement and socialist political parties of the 19th century , and continues to describe itself as a " democratic socialist party " . Labour states that it stands for the representation of the low @-@ paid working class , who have traditionally been its members and voters . The Scottish National Party is the third largest political party in the UK in terms of both party membership and representation in parliament , having won 56 out of 59 Scottish seats at the 2015 General Election . The Liberal Democrats are a liberal political party , and third largest in England in terms of membership and MPs elected . It is descended from the Liberal Party , a major ruling party of 19th century Britain through to the First World War , when it was supplanted by the Labour Party . The Liberal Democrats have historically drawn support from wide and " differing social backgrounds " . There are over 300 other , smaller political parties in the United Kingdom registered to the Electoral Commission .

= = Classification = =

According to the British Social Attitudes Survey , there are broadly two interpretations of British identity , with ethnic and civic dimensions :

The first group , which we term the ethnic dimension , contained the items about birthplace , ancestry , living in Britain , and sharing British customs and traditions . The second , or civic group , contained the items about feeling British , respecting laws and institutions , speaking English , and having British citizenship .

Of the two perspectives of British identity , the civic definition has become " the dominant idea ... by far " , and in this capacity , Britishness is sometimes considered an institutional or overarching state identity . This has been used to explain why first- , second- and third @-@ generation immigrants are more likely to describe themselves as British , rather than English , Scottish or Welsh , because it is an " institutional , inclusive " identity , that can be acquired through naturalisation and British nationality law ; the vast majority of people in the United Kingdom who are from an ethnic minority feel British .

However , this attitude is more common in England than in Scotland or Wales ; " white English people perceived themselves as English first and as British second , and most people from ethnic minority backgrounds perceived themselves as British , but none identified as English , a label they associated exclusively with white people " . Contrawise , in Scotland and Wales , White British and ethnic minority people both identified more strongly with Scotland and Wales than with Britain .

Studies and surveys have " reported that the majority of the Scots and Welsh see themselves as both Scottish / Welsh and British though with some differences in emphasis " . The Commission for Racial Equality found that with respect to notions of nationality in Britain , " the most basic , objective and uncontroversial conception of the British people is one that includes the English , the Scots and the Welsh " . However , " English participants tended to think of themselves as indistinguishably English or British , while both Scottish and Welsh participants identified themselves much more readily as Scottish or Welsh than as British " .

Some persons opted " to combine both identities " as " they felt Scottish or Welsh , but held a British passport and were therefore British " , whereas others saw themselves as exclusively Scottish or exclusively Welsh and " felt quite divorced from the British , whom they saw as the English " . Commentators have described this latter phenomenon as " nationalism " , a rejection of British identity because some Scots and Welsh interpret it as " cultural imperialism imposed " upon the United Kingdom by " English ruling elites " , or else a response to a historical misappropriation of



equating the word " English " with " British " , which has " brought about a desire among Scots , Welsh and Irish to learn more about their heritage and distinguish themselves from the broader British identity " .