

# United Kingdom

## Introduction

**Background:** Great Britain, the dominant industrial and maritime power of the 19th century, played a leading role in developing parliamentary democracy and in advancing literature and science. At its zenith, the British Empire stretched over one-fourth of the earth's surface. The first half of the 20th century saw the UK's strength seriously depleted in two World Wars. The second half witnessed the dismantling of the Empire and the UK rebuilding itself into a modern and prosperous European nation. The UK currently is weighing the degree of its integration with continental Europe. A member of the EU, it chose to remain outside of the EMU for the time being. Constitutional reform is also a significant issue in the UK. Regional assemblies with varying degrees of power opened in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland in 1999.

## Geography

**Location:** Western Europe, islands including the northern one-sixth of the island of Ireland between the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea, northwest of France

**Geographic coordinates:** 54 00 N, 2 00 W

**Map references:** Europe

### Area:

total: 244,820 sq km

land: 241,590 sq km

water: 3,230 sq km

note: includes Rockall and Shetland Islands

**Area - comparative:** slightly smaller than Oregon

### Land boundaries:

total: 360 km

border countries: Ireland 360 km

**Coastline:** 12,429 km

### Maritime claims:

continental shelf: as defined in continental shelf orders or in accordance with agreed upon boundaries

exclusive fishing zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

**Climate:** temperate; moderated by prevailing southwest winds over the North Atlantic Current; more than one-half of the days are overcast

**Terrain:** mostly rugged hills and low mountains; level to rolling plains in east and southeast

### Elevation extremes:

lowest point: Fenland -4 m

highest point: Ben Nevis 1,343 m

**Natural resources:** coal, petroleum, natural gas, tin, limestone, iron ore, salt, clay, chalk, gypsum, lead, silica, arable land

### Land use:

arable land: 25%

permanent crops: 0%

permanent pastures: 46%

forests and woodland: 10%

other: 19% (1993 est.)

**Irrigated land:** 1,080 sq km (1993 est.)

**Natural hazards:** NA

**Environment - current issues:** sulfur dioxide emissions from power plants contribute to air pollution; some rivers polluted by agricultural wastes; and coastal waters polluted because of large-scale disposal of sewage at sea

**Environment - international agreements:**

party to: Air Pollution, Air Pollution-Nitrogen Oxides, Air Pollution-Sulphur 94, Air Pollution-Volatile Organic Compounds, Antarctic-Environmental Protocol, Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Marine Life Conservation, Nuclear Test Ban, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands, Whaling

signed, but not ratified: Air Pollution-Persistent Organic Pollutants, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol

**Geography - note:** lies near vital North Atlantic sea lanes; only 35 km from France and now linked by tunnel under the English Channel; because of heavily indented coastline, no location is more than 125 km from tidal waters

## People

**Population:** 59,511,464 (July 2000 est.)

**Age structure:**

0-14 years: 19% (male 5,816,313; female 5,519,479)

15-64 years: 65% (male 19,622,152; female 19,228,938)

65 years and over: 16% (male 3,864,612; female 5,459,970) (2000 est.)

**Population growth rate:** 0.25% (2000 est.)

**Birth rate:** 11.76 births/1,000 population (2000 est.)

**Death rate:** 10.38 deaths/1,000 population (2000 est.)

**Net migration rate:** 1.07 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2000 est.)

**Sex ratio:**

at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female

under 15 years: 1.05 male(s)/female

15-64 years: 1.02 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.71 male(s)/female

total population: 0.97 male(s)/female (2000 est.)

**Infant mortality rate:** 5.63 deaths/1,000 live births (2000 est.)

**Life expectancy at birth:**

total population: 77.66 years

male: 74.97 years

female: 80.49 years (2000 est.)

**Total fertility rate:** 1.74 children born/woman (2000 est.)

**Nationality:**

noun: Briton(s), British (collective plural)

adjective: British

**Ethnic groups:** English 81.5%, Scottish 9.6%, Irish 2.4%, Welsh 1.9%, Ulster 1.8%, West Indian, Indian, Pakistani, and other 2.8%

**Religions:** Anglican 27 million, Roman Catholic 9 million, Muslim 1 million, Presbyterian 800,000, Methodist 760,000, Sikh 400,000, Hindu 350,000, Jewish 300,000 (1991 est.)

**Languages:** English, Welsh (about 26% of the population of Wales), Scottish form of Gaelic (about 60,000 in Scotland)

**Literacy:**

definition: age 15 and over has completed five or more years of schooling

total population: 99% (1978 est.)

male: NA%

female: NA%

**Government****Country name:**

conventional long form: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

conventional short form: United Kingdom

abbreviation: UK

**Data code:** UK

**Government type:** constitutional monarchy

**Capital:** London

**Administrative divisions:** 47 counties, 7 metropolitan counties, 26 districts, 9

regions, and 3 islands areas; England - 39 counties, 7 metropolitan counties\*;

Avon, Bedford, Berkshire, Buckingham, Cambridge, Cheshire, Cleveland,

Cornwall, Cumbria, Derby, Devon, Dorset, Durham, East Sussex, Essex,

Gloucester, Greater London\*, Greater Manchester\*, Hampshire, Hereford and

Worcester, Hertford, Humberside, Isle of Wight, Kent, Lancashire, Leicester,

Lincoln, Merseyside\*, Norfolk, Northampton, Northumberland, North Yorkshire,

Nottingham, Oxford, Shropshire, Somerset, South Yorkshire\*, Stafford, Suffolk,

Surrey, Tyne and Wear\*, Warwick, West Midlands\*, West Sussex, West

Yorkshire\*, Wiltshire; Northern Ireland - 26 districts; Antrim, Ards, Armagh,

Ballymena, Ballymoney, Banbridge, Belfast, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh,

Coleraine, Cookstown, Craigavon, Down, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Larne,

Limavady, Lisburn, Londonderry, Magherafelt, Moyle, Newry and Mourne,

Newtownabbey, North Down, Omagh, Strabane; Scotland - 9 regions, 3

islands areas\*; Borders, Central, Dumfries and Galloway, Fife, Grampian,

Highland, Lothian, Orkney\*, Shetland\*, Strathclyde, Tayside, Western Isles\*;

Wales - 8 counties; Clwyd, Dyfed, Gwent, Gwynedd, Mid Glamorgan, Powys,

South Glamorgan, West Glamorgan

note: England may now have 35 counties and Wales 9 counties

**Dependent areas:** Anguilla, Bermuda, British Indian Ocean Territory, British

Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Jersey,

Isle of Man, Montserrat, Pitcairn Islands, Saint Helena, South Georgia and the

South Sandwich Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands

**Independence:** England has existed as a unified entity since the 10th century;

the union between England and Wales was enacted under the Statute of

Rhuddlan in 1284; in the Act of Union of 1707, England and Scotland agreed

to permanent union as Great Britain; the legislative union of Great Britain and

Ireland was implemented in 1801, with the adoption of the name the United

Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland; the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921 formalized

a partition of Ireland; six northern Irish counties remained part of the United

Kingdom as Northern Ireland and the current name of the country, the United

Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was adopted in 1927

**National holiday:** Celebration of the Birthday of the Queen (second Saturday

in June)

**Constitution:** unwritten; partly statutes, partly common law and practice

**Legal system:** common law tradition with early Roman and modern

continental influences; no judicial review of Acts of Parliament; accepts

compulsory ICJ jurisdiction, with reservations; British courts and legislation are increasingly subject to review by European Union courts

**Suffrage:** 18 years of age; universal

**Executive branch:**

chief of state: Queen ELIZABETH II (since 6 February 1952); Heir Apparent Prince CHARLES (son of the queen, born 14 November 1948)

head of government: Prime Minister Anthony C. L. (Tony) BLAIR (since 2 May 1997)

cabinet: Cabinet of Ministers appointed by the prime minister

elections: none; the monarch is hereditary; the prime minister is the leader of the majority party in the House of Commons (assuming there is no majority party, a prime minister would have a majority coalition or at least a coalition that was not rejected by the majority)

**Legislative branch:** bicameral Parliament consists of House of Lords (the old House of Lords has been disbanded, and the new one is still being formed; the most likely plan calls for 500 members, one-fifth elected and the rest appointed) and House of Commons (659 seats; members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms unless the House is dissolved earlier)

elections: House of Lords - no elections; note - the newly-forming House of Lords may call for some elected seats; House of Commons - last held 1 May 1997 (next to be held by NA May 2002); note - in 1998 elections were held for a Northern Ireland Parliament (because of unresolved disputes among existing parties, the transfer of power from London to Northern Ireland came only at the end of 1999 and was rescinded in February 2000); in 1999 there were elections for a new Scottish Parliament and a new Welsh Assembly

election results: House of Commons - percent of vote by party - Labor 45%, Conservative and Unionist 31%, Liberal Democratic 17%, other 7%; seats by party - Labor 418, Conservative and Unionist 165, Liberal Democrat 46, other 30

note: in 1999, the government ended the right of most hereditary members, except for life members and 92 hereditary members, to sit in the House of Lords; they will sit until final reforms are made

**Judicial branch:** House of Lords, several Lords of Appeal in Ordinary are appointed by the monarch for life

## Economy

**Economy - overview:** The UK, a leading trading power and financial center, deploys an essentially capitalistic economy, one of the quartet of trillion dollar economies of Western Europe. Over the past two decades the government has greatly reduced public ownership and contained the growth of social welfare programs. Agriculture is intensive, highly mechanized, and efficient by European standards, producing about 60% of food needs with only 1% of the labor force. The UK has large coal, natural gas, and oil reserves; primary energy production accounts for 10% of GDP, one of the highest shares of any industrial nation. Services, particularly banking, insurance, and business services, account by far for the largest proportion of GDP while industry continues to decline in importance. Economic growth has been slowed in 1999; recovery to 3% is in prospect for 2000, based on a rise in exports and domestic demand. The BLAIR government has put off the question of participation in the euro system until after the next election, not expected until 2001; Chancellor of

the Exchequer BROWN has identified some key economic tests to determine whether the UK should join the common currency system.

**GDP:** purchasing power parity - \$1.29 trillion (1999 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:** 1.9% (1999 est.)

**GDP - per capita:** purchasing power parity - \$21,800 (1999 est.)

**GDP - composition by sector:**

agriculture: 1.7%

industry: 25.3%

services: 73% (1998)

**Population below poverty line:** 17%

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:**

lowest 10%: 2.4%

highest 10%: 24.7% (1986)

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):** 2.3% (1999)

**Labor force:** 29.2 million (1999)

**Labor force - by occupation:** services 68.9%, manufacturing and construction 17.5%, government 11.3%, energy 1.2%, agriculture 1.1% (1996)

**Unemployment rate:** 6% (1999)

**Budget:**

revenues: \$541 billion

expenditures: \$507.5 billion, including capital expenditures of \$35.1 billion (FY98/99)

**Industries:** production machinery including machine tools, electric power equipment, automation equipment, railroad equipment, shipbuilding, aircraft, motor vehicles and parts, electronics and communications equipment, metals, chemicals, coal, petroleum, paper and paper products, food processing, textiles, clothing, and other consumer goods

**Industrial production growth rate:** -0.3% (1999)

**Electricity - production:** 343.099 billion kWh (1998)

**Electricity - production by source:**

fossil fuel: 68.24%

hydro: 1.49%

nuclear: 28.48%

other: 1.79% (1998)

**Electricity - consumption:** 331.482 billion kWh (1998)

**Electricity - exports:** 200 million kWh (1998)

**Electricity - imports:** 12.6 billion kWh (1998)

**Agriculture - products:** cereals, oilseed, potatoes, vegetables; cattle, sheep, poultry; fish

**Exports:** \$271 billion (f.o.b., 1998)

**Exports - commodities:** manufactured goods, fuels, chemicals; food, beverages, tobacco

**Exports - partners:** EU 58% (Germany 12%, France 10%, Netherlands 8%), US 13% (1998)

**Imports:** \$305.9 billion (f.o.b., 1998)

**Imports - commodities:** manufactured goods, machinery, fuels; foodstuffs

**Imports - partners:** EU 53% (Germany 13%, France 9%, Netherlands 7%, Italy 5%), US 14% (1998)

**Debt - external:** \$NA

**Economic aid - donor:** ODA, \$3.4 billion (1997)

**Currency:** 1 British pound = 100 pence

**Exchange rates:** British pounds per US\$1 - 0.6092 (January 2000), 0.6180 (1999), 0.6037 (1998), 0.6106 (1997), 0.6403 (1996), 0.6335 (1995)

**Fiscal year:** 1 April - 31 March

### Communications

**Telephones - main lines in use:** 29.41 million (1995)

**Telephones - mobile cellular:** 13 million (yearend 1998)

**Telephone system:** technologically advanced domestic and international system

domestic: equal mix of buried cables, microwave radio relay, and fiber-optic systems

international: 40 coaxial submarine cables; satellite earth stations - 10 Intelsat (7 Atlantic Ocean and 3 Indian Ocean), 1 Inmarsat (Atlantic Ocean region), and 1 Eutelsat; at least 8 large international switching centers

**Radio broadcast stations:** AM 219, FM 431, shortwave 3 (1998)

**Radios:** 84.5 million (1997)

**Television broadcast stations:** 78 (plus 869 repeaters) (1997)

**Televisions:** 30.5 million (1997)

**Internet Service Providers (ISPs):** 364 (1999)

### Transportation

#### Railways:

total: 16,878 km

broad gauge: 342 km 1.600-m gauge (190 km double track); note - all 1.600-m gauge track, of which 342 km is in common carrier use, and is in Northern Ireland

standard gauge: 16,536 km 1.435-m gauge (4,928 km electrified; 12,591 km double or multiple track) (1996)

#### Highways:

total: 371,603 km

paved: 371,603 km (including 3,303 km of expressways)

unpaved: 0 km (1998 est.)

**Waterways:** 3,200 km

**Pipelines:** crude oil (almost all insignificant) 933 km; petroleum products 2,993 km; natural gas 12,800 km

**Ports and harbors:** Aberdeen, Belfast, Bristol, Cardiff, Dover, Falmouth, Felixstowe, Glasgow, Grangemouth, Hull, Leith, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Peterhead, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Scapa Flow, Southampton, Sullom Voe, Tees, Tyne

#### Merchant marine:

total: 173 ships (1,000 GRT or over) totaling 2,917,708 GRT/3,063,113 DWT

ships by type: bulk 4, cargo 33, chemical tanker 5, combination ore/oil 1, container 39, liquified gas 2, passenger 8, passenger/cargo 1, petroleum tanker 50, roll-on/roll-off 18, short-sea passenger 10, specialized tanker 1, vehicle carrier 1 (1999 est.)

**Airports:** 498 (1999 est.)

#### Airports - with paved runways:

total: 357

over 3,047 m: 10

2,438 to 3,047 m: 33

1,524 to 2,437 m: 166

914 to 1,523 m: 93  
under 914 m: 55 (1999 est.)  
**Airports - with unpaved runways:**  
total: 141  
1,524 to 2,437 m: 1  
914 to 1,523 m: 23  
under 914 m: 117 (1999 est.)  
**Heliports:** 12 (1999 est.)

**Notes to Visitors and Users:**

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