

# United Kingdom

## Geography

Location: Western Europe, islands including the northern one-sixth of the island of Ireland between the North

Area:

total area: 244,820 sq km

land area: 241,590 sq km

Land boundaries: total 360 km, 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 half of the days are overcast

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

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

Land use:

arable land: 29%

permanent crops: 0%

meadows and pastures: 48%

forest and woodland: 9%

other: 14%

Irrigated land: 1,570 sq km (1989)

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

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: 58,295,119 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 19% (female 5,572,189; male 5,843,192)

15-64 years: 65% (female 18,723,583; male 18,935,931)

65 years and over: 16% (female 5,471,383; male 3,748,841) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 0.27% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 13.18 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 10.66 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 0.17 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 7 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 77 years

male: 74.18 years

female: 79.95 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 1.82 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:

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

adjective: British

Ethnic divisions: 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.)

note: the UK does not include a question on religion in its census

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

Literacy:  
total population: 99%

## Government

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

Type: constitutional monarchy

Capital: London

Independence: 1 January 1801 (United Kingdom established)

National holiday: Celebration of the Birthday of the Queen (second Saturday in June)

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: blue with the red cross of Saint George (patron saint of England) edged in white superimposed on the diagonal red cross of Saint Patrick (patron saint of Ireland) which is superimposed on the diagonal white cross of Saint Andrew (patron saint of Scotland); known as the Union Flag or Union Jack; the design and colors (especially the Blue Ensign) have been the basis for a number of other flags including dependencies, Commonwealth countries, and others

## Economy

Overview: The UK is one of the world's great trading powers and financial centers, and its economy ranks among the four largest in Western Europe

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

Agriculture: accounts for only 1.5% of GDP; wide variety of crops and livestock products

Illicit drugs: gateway country for Latin American cocaine entering the European market; producer of synthetic drugs; transshipment point for Southwest Asian heroin; money-laundering center

## Transportation

Railroads:  
total: 16,888 km

Highways:  
total: 360,047 km (includes Northern Ireland)

Inland waterways: 2,291 total; British Waterways Board, 606 km; Port Authorities, 706 km; other, 979 km

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

Ports: Aberdeen, Belfast, Bristol, Cardiff, Grangemouth, Hull, Leith, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Medway, Sullom Voe, Tees, Tyne

Airports:  
total: 505

Defence Forces

Branches: Army, Royal Navy (includes Royal Marines), Royal Air Force