

United Kingdom

Type of Government: Fully consolidated parliamentary democracy

Capital City: London.

Prime Minister: David Cameron (term ends 2020).

Ideology: Centrist western liberal democracy. Britain is one of the inventors of the welfare state but embraced capitalism from 1980s on.

Region: Europe (Same as France and Luxemburg)

Neighbours: Ireland.



DEMOGRAPHICS

- **Population:** 63 million. It is the third largest in the European Union and one of the most densely populated in the world.
- **Age:** Life expectancy is 80.57 years, with a significantly aging population.
- **Religion:** Anglicanism is the state religion, but Britain today is very much secular and multi-faith.
- **Ethnicities:** 86% white, 1.8% Indian, 1.6% Pakistani, 0.8% Black African and 0.4% Chinese. Immigration is an extremely passionate issue for many Britons, and is at the heart of the country's ambivalence to the EU.
- **Language:** English (Birthplace of the world's most widely spoken language).

ECONOMY

- The UK economy is the 6th largest in the world and the 3rd largest in the European Union behind Germany and France with a GDP of \$2.4 trillion.
- Inflation is 2.8% (64th lowest)

Major Industries

- The service sector makes up 73% of GDP. Britain is famous for its financial services sector.
- Tourism is important; London has the most international visitors of any city in the world.
- The automotive industry is a substantial part of the economy and employs over 800,000 people and generates £26.6 billion in exports

Exports

- **Major Export Partners:** Germany 10.9%, US 9.9%, Netherlands 7.9%, France 7.4%
- Major exports include transport equipment 16%, Chemical Products 10%, Machinery and Equipment 9%, and Pharmaceutical products 8%

Imports

- The UK imports mostly manufactured products are computer, electrical and optical products 11%, Transport Equipment 14%, chemical products, food and beverages and basic metals.
- UK's main export partners are Germany (12.5%), China (8.2%), Netherlands (7.1%), US (7%), France (5.7%), Belgium (4.8%), and Norway (4.7%).

Natural Resources:

- Few viable natural resources; coal mining largely ended in the 1980s.

MILITARY

Size: 206,600 regular personnel. The British armed forces are the second-largest military in the European Union when considering professional personnel. Britain has the 4th highest defence budget in the world.

Air Force: The Royal Air Force operates around 847 aircraft.

Navy: The Royal Navy is a technologically sophisticated naval force that includes 78 commissioned ships and 170 aircraft. Britain is a nuclear power with a large number of nuclear submarines (“Trident”)

Current Activity: Peacekeeping, humanitarian and disaster relief tasks have increased, mostly related to NATO and the UN. The UK have recently supported French troops in the Malian Civil War, including providing training and equipment to the Malian government. The UK has been heavily involved in the Iraq war of 2003, though has pledged to withdraw troops by 2014.



POLITICS

Domestic politics

- One of the most developed, peaceful, and prosperous countries on Earth; UK citizens share Australian’s lack of perspective and love of complaining. All sides of politics are uniformly unpopular.
- Strong inequalities between South (which includes London and is very wealthy) and North (which doesn’t and isn’t); particular divisions between England and Scotland, which seeks independence.
- The UK is ranked 17th on Transparency International’s Corruption Index, suggesting high levels of transparency occur across all levels of public life.

Foreign Policy Concerns

- Famously USA’s most reliable ally; the two countries have a “special relationship”.
- Major disputes between Argentina on the ownership of the Falkand Islands (they’re next to Argentina but their population is British; Margaret Thatcher fought a war over them); other international disputes are with the EU, which the UK dislikes and may leave;
- Strongly pro-intervention, pro-human rights, and pro-UN. Tony Blair famously forced George W Bush to attempt to get UN authorisation for the Iraq War; Britain recently sabotaged an EU diplomatic process to allow the UK and France to arm the Syrian rebels.
- Unusually strong commitment to foreign aid; the UK’s aid agency is a full-fledged government department and one of the few not to be cut in recent budget cuts. The UK is widely considered a leader in the fight against global poverty.
- Domestic terrorism is an ongoing threat, causing diplomatic missions overseas to be on high alert to attacks against British nationals.

More Information

Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom

CIA: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uk.html>

BBC: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/1038758.stm

BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk/>

Latest news from the New York Times (<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/unitedkingdom/index.html>)

the Economist (<http://www.economist.com/topics/united-kingdom>),

the Guardian (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk>), and