

OFFICIAL NAME: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

CAPITAL: London

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Constitutional Monarchy

AREA: 244,103 Sq Km (94,249 Sq Mi)

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION: 58,991,500



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: United Kingdom is located off the northwestern coast of Europe between the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea. It is separated from the continent by the Strait of Dover and the English Channel, and from the Irish Republic by the Irish Sea and the St. Georges Channel. The United Kingdom is comprised of four constituents, England, Wales and Scotland which alone form Great Britain and combined with Northern Ireland and several island groups, form the United Kingdom. Most of England consists of low plains and downs with the major hill regions situated to the north, west and southeast where elevations do not rise above 305 metres (1,000 feet) at any point. The Cheviot Hills run east to west along the Scottish border, while from the Scottish border to Derbyshire in Central England lie the north to south Pennine Range. The Central Midlands, a plains region that consists of low, rolling hills and fertile valleys is located south of the Pennines. The Eastern Coast is protected by embankments from gales or high tides, although most of the low-lying coast is below 5 metres (15 feet) above sea level. Scafell Pike, England's highest point is located in the northwest with an elevation of 978 metres (3,210 feet). Its principal rivers are the Severn, Thames, Humber, Tees, Tyne, Tweed, Avon, Exe and Mersey. Scotland is divided into three topographical regions. (1.) The Northern Highlands which occupy the northern half of the country and contains the highest point in the British Isles, Ben Nevis at 1,343 metres (4,406 feet). (2.) The Central Lowland which contains the valleys of the Tay, Forth and Clyde Rivers, and also has an average elevation of 152 metres (500 feet). (3.) The Southern Uplands with moor land that is cut by rivers and valleys, and rises Merrick Peak at 842 metres (2,764 feet). Wales is a country of hills and mountains with high plateaux and ranges dissected by river valleys. In the south, west and north, there are narrow coastal plains while the Cambrian Mountains occupy most of the land area and include Wales' highest point, Mount Snowdon at 1,085 metres (3,560 feet). Northern Ireland consists mostly of low lying plateaux and hills while the Mourne Mountains in the southeast include Northern Ireland's highest point, Slieve Donard at 852 metres (2,796 feet). Lake Neagh lies in a central depression of Northern Ireland and is the Kingdom's largest lake. Major Cities (pop. est.); Greater London 6,933,000, Birmingham 1,012,000, Leeds 725,000, Glasgow 682,000, Sheffield 532,000, Bradford 488,000, Liverpool 477,000, Edinburgh 442,000, Manchester 433,000, Bristol 398,000 (1993). Land Use; forested 10%, pastures 46%, agricultural-cultivated 25%, other 19% (1993).

CLIMATE: The United Kingdom has a mild and temperate climate which is influenced by the North Atlantic Drift and the southwesterly winds. Rainfall is fairly evenly distributed throughout the year with March to June the driest period and September to January the

wettest. Average annual precipitation varies from 1,600 mm (63 inches) in the mountainous areas of the north and west to less than 800 mm (32 inches) over central and eastern areas. Average temperature ranges in London are from 2 to 6 degrees Celsius (36 to 43 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 13 to 22 degrees Celsius (55 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit) in July.

PEOPLE: The principal ethnic majority are the Whites with 92.1% of which 83.6% are English, 8.6% are Scottish, 4.9% are Welsh, and 2.9% are Northern Irish. While 2% are Black, 1.8% are Indian, 1.3% are Pakistani, 1.2% are mixed and 1.6% are other. The English and lowland Scots are of Anglo-Saxon and Norman descent while the Welsh and Irish are mainly of Celtic descent, the Scottish highlanders are also of Celtic descent and the islanders around Scotland are of Viking (Norse) descent.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 238 persons per sq km (612 persons per sq mi) (1993). Urban-Rural; 91.5% urban, 8.5% rural (1985). Sex Distribution; 48.8% male, 51.2% female (1991). Life Expectancy at Birth; 72.2 years male, 77.9 years female (1988). Age Breakdown; 19% under 15, 22% 15 to 29, 21% 30 to 44, 17% 45 to 59, 14% 60 to 74, 7% 75 and over (1991). Birth Rate; 13.8 per 1,000 (1991). Death Rate; 11.2 per 1,000 (1991). Increase Rate; 2.6 per 1,000 (1991). Infant Mortality Rate; 7.4 per 1,000 live births (1991).

RELIGIONS: Mostly Christians with 59% of the population Protestant while 9% are Roman Catholic. Other religious minorities include Muslims which account for 3% of the population and there are also Jewish, Hindu and Sikh minorities.

LANGUAGES: The official language is English, although Welsh and Gaelic are spoken by minorities in Wales and the Scottish Highlands respectively.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: primary or secondary education 89.7%, incomplete post secondary 4.8%, higher 5.5% (1981). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over virtually 100% (1990).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: In Oct. 1945 Britain became a founding member of the UN and in 1949 joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In Feb. 1950 the Labor Party led by Clement Attlee was re-elected. In Oct. 1951 the Tories and Winston Churchill were returned to power. In Feb. 1952 King George VI died and was succeeded by his eldest daughter who was crowned Queen Elizabeth II. In Apr. 1955 Prime Minister Churchill was forced to resign through illness and was succeeded by Sir Anthony Eden. In Oct. 1956 Britain and France bombed Cairo and captured Port Said in Egypt, after Egypt nationalized the Suez

Canal. On Nov. 23, 1956 a ceasefire was declared after strong US and UN pressure and the Anglo-French troops were withdrawn. In Jan. 1957 Prime Minister Eden resigned due to illness and was succeeded by Harold Macmillan. In Oct. 1959 Macmillan was re-elected and during the early 1960's a number of British overseas colonies were granted independence. In Aug. 1961 Britain applied for European Community (EC) membership, however, it was vetoed by France. In 1962 the Parliament tightened control of the Commonwealth Immigration Act to restrict the number of immigrants from the Caribbean and Indian subcontinent. In Oct. 1964 Harold Wilson and the Labor Party won the general elections. In Jan. 1965 Winston Churchill died and in 1967 Britain made another application for EU membership which was again dismissed. In 1969 riots in Londonderry broke out between the Catholic and Protestant communities which resulted in troops being sent to restore order and in Dec. 1969 an Ulster Member of Parliament, Bernadette Devlin was imprisoned on an incitement to riot charge. In June 1970 the Tories under Edward Heath were elected to power. In 1971 the Irish Republican Army (IRA) began its terrorist campaign against British troops stationed in Ireland. In Jan. 1972 Britain's EU membership was approved and in April, Prime Minister Heath imposed direct British rule on Ulster (Northern Ireland) after the IRA bombed and killed seven soldiers. In 1973 Dublin, Belfast and London established a joint Council of Ireland, although it collapsed in May 1974 and direct rule was again imposed. In Mar. 1974 Wilson was returned to office but resigned in Mar. 1976 and was succeeded by James Callaghan. In 1979 strikes also known as the "winter of discontent" escalated in Britain. In May 1979, after a vote of no confidence in the government, Margaret Thatcher became Britain's first woman Prime Minister. Prime Minister Thatcher remained in power for around 11.5 years and reversed Britain's economic downward spiral with a massive program of privatization. In 1980 and 1984 there were Embassy sieges by Iranian and Libyan terrorists. During 1981 there were riots in Ulster and also by youths in South London and Liverpool. In Apr. 1982 Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands and Britain responded by sending a task force which liberated the Islands in June. In Mar. 1984 coal miners went on a strike until Mar. 1985. In Oct. 1984 the IRA unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate Prime Minister Thatcher with a bomb attack that killed five people. In Nov. 1985 Britain and Ireland signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement that allowed Ireland to have a consultative role in Ulster's future. In Feb. 1986 the French and British governments signed the Channel Tunnel agreement. In July 1990 the IRA assassinated, Ian Gow a Tory Member of Parliament. During the late 1980's and in 1990 Prime Minister Thatcher clashed with other EU council leaders over the EU's single currency monetary union, although she was finally outvoted. In Apr. 1990 the government introduced a controversial community charge called the poll tax. On Nov. 1990 Prime Minister Thatcher resigned and was succeeded by John Major. In early 1991 Britain assisted the US in liberating Kuwait, after Iraq's invasion in Aug 1990. On March 14, 1991 the Court of Appeal released the "Birmingham Six" following their conviction for the murder of 21 people in two IRA bomb attacks in 1974. On March 21, 1991 the government announced that the poll tax would be abolished and a new "council tax" would be introduced in 1993. On June 17, the British government held talks with North Ireland's main political parties in Belfast's parliament, Stormont. Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, was excluded from the talks and on July 3, 1991 the talks were adjourned without any substantial agreement being made. On June 28, 1991 former prime minister Thatcher announced that she wouldn't seek reelection at the next planned general elections. In July

1991 Prime Minister Major announced a "Citizens Charter" that was hoped to restore the party's poor public service reputation, particularly regarding health services. In the same month the Bank of England revoked the Bank of Credit and Commerce International's (BCCI) license and commenced the international shutdown of the bank in which many thousands of UK patrons lost their savings. On July 9, 1991 Defense Secretary Tom King announced the government intended to reduce the size of its armed forces by 20% and cut expenditure by 6% over three years. On Sept. 2, 1991 Prime Minister Major visited Beijing, China to sign an agreement with China to build a new airport at Hong Kong. In Nov. 1991 Robert Maxwell one of the UK's largest media moguls died, following which investigations found that Maxwell had misappropriated some 426 million pounds from his companies' pension funds to support his ailing empire. In Dec. 1991 the country's inflation rate fell to 4.5%. Also during 1991 there were several IRA terrorist attacks including one in Feb. 1991 on the Prime Minister residence. On March 11, 1992 Prime Minister Major announced general elections for April 9. On April 9, 1992 John Major was reelected Prime Minister, albeit with a much reduced parliamentary majority. On May 21, 1992 the House of Commons ratified the European Communities Amendment Bill. On July 1, 1992 the UK took over the presidency of the EU. On Aug. 18, 1992 the government announced plans to send some 1,800 peacekeeping troops to the former Yugoslavia. In Sept. 1992 there was a speculative attack on the Sterling and on Sept. 16, 1992 the government in response to the devaluation of its currency raised official interest rates and then suspended its European exchange-rate mechanism membership. On Oct. 6, 1992 the Conservatives held their annual conference which resulted in heated debate led by the Euro-skeptics, a small group of Tory MPs opposed to the Maastricht Treaty. On Nov. 4, 1992 Prime Minister Major put the Maastricht Treaty issue to the Parliament which narrowly passed by three votes, although the government agreed to delay the ratification of the legislation until a second Danish referendum on the Maastricht Treaty was held. On Nov. 20, 1992 a severe fire destroyed much of Windsor Castle, following which the government announced it would finance the Castle's restoration. Also in 1992 the Royal Family became the center of controversy with various revelations that Princess Di wished to end her marriage with Prince Charles while the IRA continued its bombing campaign throughout Northern Ireland and London for several weeks at a time. In 1993 Prime Minister Major endeavored to have the Parliament ratify the European Communities Amendment Bill which would commit the UK to the Maastricht Treaty although providing it with the right to opt out of two key issues, monetary union and the "social chapter". On Jan. 26, 1993 the Bank of England cut its official base interest rate to 6%, the lowest since 1977. In March 1993 Norman Lamont, Chancellor of the Exchequer (Treasurer), announced the government's budget which included tax increases and a value-added fuel tax. On May 27, 1993 Prime Minister Major under considerable pressure sacked Lamont and appointed Kenneth Clarke as his successor. In June 1993 the UK's annual inflation rate fell to 1.2%, the lowest since 1964. On June 21, 1993 a key Conservative minister Michael Heseltine, responsible for the controversial plan to shutdown most of the country's coal collieries, suffered a heart attack. On July 22, 1993 two "Maastricht" proposals were put to the House of Commons, one by the Labor Party and the other by the Conservative government, both of which were defeated. As a result Prime Minister Major announced that a debate would be held in which a motion of confidence would be linked to the Maastricht Treaty, thereby ensuring fresh elections if the government failed. On Aug. 2,

1993 the government ratified the treaty legislation. On Oct. 20, 1993 the government announced that 12 state-owned coal collieries, which had earlier received a reprieve from closure, would be shut down and further shutdowns were inevitable. In the same month, Baroness Margaret Thatcher published her memoirs entitled "The Downing Street Years" which openly criticized Prime Minister Major and resulted in further aggravation for the Conservative government. On Nov. 5, 1993 the government passed another controversial bill to privatise many of British Rail's services which met with stiff opposition from BR's management. On Dec. 3, 1993 Princess Diana announced that she was withdrawing from public life to spend more time with her sons and indicated that the intrusive nature of the tabloid press was responsible for her decision. On Dec. 15, 1993 Prime Minister Major and the Irish Republic's Prime Minister, Albert Reynolds announced a joint peace initiative and that if the IRA ceased its terrorism campaign it could join negotiations three months after the cessation. Also in 1993 the government sent a further 1,200 troops to the former Yugoslavia while the UK and China continued their stalemate over a proposed bill by Chris Patten, HK's Governor, to restructure Hong Kong's Legislative Council to make it more representative of the HK people. Terrorist acts by both the IRA and the Protestant paramilitary groups continued throughout 1993 resulting in a considerable loss of life and property damage.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Pound Sterling (PdSt) divided into 100 New Pence.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$1,042,700,000,000 (1993). National Debt; PdSt 223,877,000,000 (1993). Imports; PdSt 145,059,000,000 (1994). Exports; PdSt 134,465,000,000 (1994). Tourism Receipts; USD \$13,451,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; PdSt -12,029,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 28,271,000 or 48.6% of total population (1993). Unemployed; 10.2% (1993).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are other EU countries, the USA, Sweden, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Switzerland and South Africa.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Barley, Coal, Fruit and Vegetables, Fish, Oil and Natural Gas, Potatoes, Sugar Beets, Wheat.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Coal Mining, Chemicals, Clothing, Food Processing, Finance and Business Services, Iron and Steel, Light Industry, Machinery and Transport Equipment, Metals, Oil and Gas Production and Refining, Paper and Paper Products, Textiles.

MAIN EXPORTS: Agriculture and Industrial Equipment, Aircraft, Crude Oil and Petroleum Products, Chemicals, Electrical Goods, Food Products, Iron and Steel, Non-Ferrous Metals, Transport Equipment, Vehicles.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 37,849 km (23,518 mi) (1990), passenger-km 32,057,000,000 (19,919,000,000 passenger-mi) (1992), cargo ton-km 15,347,000,000 (10,511,000,000 short ton-mi) (1992). Roads (Great Britain); length 358,034 km (222,472 mi) (1990). Vehicles (Great Britain); cars 19,737,000 (1991), trucks and buses 2,773,000 (1991). Merchant Marine; vessels 1,631 (1992), deadweight tonnage 4,355,063 (1992). Air Transport; passenger-km 87,208,110,000 (54,188,591,000 passenger-mi) (1990), cargo ton-km 2,388,700,000 (1,636,021,000 short ton-mi) (1990).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 101 with a total circulation of 22,100,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 70,000,000 (1993). Television; licenses 20,413,000 (1994). Telephones; units 28,680,900 (1994).

MILITARY: 236,900 (1995) total active duty personnel with 49.0% army, 21.3% navy and 29.7% air force while military expenditure accounts for 3.6% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).