

# I. The United Kingdom

## 1. The Country

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland consists of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland (or Ulster). Great Britain is an island made up of England, Wales and Scotland. The Republic of Ireland (or Eire) is an independent country.

	The United Kingdom	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
<b>Surface</b>	243,610 km <sup>2</sup>	130,395 km <sup>2</sup>	13,843 km <sup>2</sup>	78,387 km <sup>2</sup>	20,779 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Population (2011 Census)</b>	63,181,775	53,013,000	1,810,863	5,295,000	3,063,500
<b>GDP per capita (estimation for 2011)</b>	\$ 2 061 765.9 millions/ \$ 36,000				
<b>Currency</b>	P				
<b>Name of inhabitants</b>					
<b>Capital city</b>					
<b>Official language(s)</b>					
<b>Official flag</b>	Union Jack (superposition of 3 crosses)				
<b>Emblems</b>					
<b>Local parliaments (devolved parliaments)</b>			The Northern Ireland Assembly	The Scottish Parliament	The National Assembly for Wales

	Conservative Party	Labour Party (New Labour since 1994)	Liberal Democrat Party
Foundation	18 <sup>th</sup>		(merger of Liberal and Social Democratic Parties)
Leader in January 2013			
Number of seat in parliament (2012 elections)	306 (36 % of the popular vote)	258 (29 %)	57 (23 %)
General political views	Right/Centre-right	Left/Centre left : social democrat.	Centre/centre left.
Social views	<p>More responsibility given to citizens, more power to local communities and less to the central State (Mr. Cameron's "Big Society" program).</p> <p>Less support of the State to welfare programs.</p> <p>Stricter repression of crime.</p>	Advocate of the welfare state, equality of opportunities, multiculturalism.	<p>Liberal.</p> <p>Importance of civil liberties.</p> <p>Will to reduce the role of the state and to empower the people.</p>
Economic views	Liberal : as little state intervention as possible	Free market economy with state regulation	Liberal : less taxation, spending cuts but also support to minimum wage
Views on Europe			
Some Prime ministers (PM)	<p>Winston Churchill</p> <p>Margaret Thatcher ( ) : the ' supported a free market economy with little regulation, fought the influence of the trade unions and privatized nationalized industries. She developed the special relationship or close alliance with the USA.</p>	<p>Clement Attlee ( 5- )</p> <p>Tony Blair ( ) : he became the party's leader in 1994 and reformed it to found the New Labour, taking his distance with socialism and trade unions. He got the support of the middle classes, laying the emphasis on education and jobs, which owed him a landslide victory in 1997</p>	<p>Lloyd George ( )</p>

National newspapers/ Sunday edition	Owner	Circulation : 2012/2000 (online)	type	Political bias
The Sun	F	Daily : 2,582,301/3,557,336/ (16,085,000 e-readers a month)		
The Daily Mail/The Mail on Sunday	Associated Newspapers	Daily : 1,945,496/2,353,915	Middle market	
The Daily Mirror/the Sunday Mirror	Mirror Group	Daily : 1,102,810/2,270,543		
The Daily Telegraph/The Sunday Telegraph	Telegraph Group	78,774/1,039,749	Quality	conservative
The Times/The Sunday Times	F	Daily : 397,549/726,349 (5,520,000 e-readers a month)	Middle market/ Quality	
The Financial Times		Daily : 316,493/435,478	Quality	Centre right
The Guardian/The Observer	Guardian Media Group	Daily : 215,988/401,560	Quality	Centre left
The Independent/The Independent on Sunday	Independent News	Daily : 105,160/222,106	Quality	Liberal
The Economist		: 210,386 (print edition in the UK) Worldwide circulation : 1,574,803. (Online version : e-readers a month worldwide)	In depth articles on current social, political and economic issues	

1. Australian American media Mogul Rupert Murdoch, owner of Press Group News Corporation. In 2011 he faced the exposure of a case of police bribery and Royal family members' tapping. The families of a murdered schoolgirl and of victims of the London 2005 bombing had also been wired by journalists from one of the group's newspaper, *News of The World*, which subsequently had to close down.

## 7. The UK educational system

### The school system

In the UK the educational system has traditionally never been much centralized and a large panel of schools and systems, private and public, are available. Before the end of the 19th century education was essentially private and not organized by the state. The Department of Education has influence on the academic content and number of school hours. Education is a responsibility to each country of the UK. Specificities thus exist particularly in Scotland which has the oldest national education system and a few public schools of the Union.

Most schools in the UK are now state-funded, pupils generally wear a uniform and religious education is part of the curriculum. School is compulsory from 5 to 17 (to 18 as of 2015).

About 6.5% of pupils attend private schools. These are called "independent" schools, "free schools" or "public schools", referring to the fact that the first schools (which were all private) welcomed groups of pupils for public classes as opposed to homeschooling. Public schools are today the most prestigious ones. The most renowned are Eton, Harrow, Winchester and Rugby. Public school fees vary from £ 2 500 to £ 30 000 a year for the best schools. Private schools are not submitted to academic control from the State.

As regards state funded schools, there was no national curriculum before the Thatcher *Education Reform Act* of 1988. The reform introduced a program of 12 subjects and 3 compulsory topics (English, Mathematics and Science). But schools can escape national authority control regarding curricula provided enough people from the local community agree (2010 *Academies Bill*). Some state-funded schools remain "selective" and welcome pupils on selective academic criteria as opposed to the "comprehensive" schools.

The classical state-funded comprehensive schools test pupils on compulsory topics to check the acquisition of SATs (Standard Attainment Targets) at various stages called "key stages". At the end of compulsory secondary education, pupils take the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) exams. They can then go to vocational colleges or technical colleges or enrol for two more secondary years or 6th form, to eventually go to university: those two years prepare them for A-level exams.

Age (average)	School Year	School	Age for test/exam (average)	Test
5-7	Reception Year 1 Year 2	Primary	7	Key stage 1 SAT's
8-11	Year 3 Year 4 Year 5 Year 6	Primary	11	Key stage 2 SAT's
12-14	Year 7 Year 8 Year 9	Secondary	14	Key stage 3 SAT's
15-16	Year 10 Year 11	Secondary	16	Key stage 4 SAT's and GCSE
17-18	Year 12 Year 13	6th form	17 18	AS level A level

In 2010, 75% of the 25–64 population had at least upper secondary school level educational qualification.

### Further education

Universities in the UK are all selective. To enrol, pupils must fill in a *Common Application Form* and are accepted depending on their academic achievements during sixth form years and at A levels.

Universities in the UK are state-funded apart from the University of Buckingham and the University of Law which *charge fees*. For other universities only boarding fees were charged until 2012. As of 2012, universities may charge students with a maximum of £ 9000 a year for tuition fees. Scottish universities have maintained free tuition for Scottish students and non-UK European students.

British universities offer a three-year *undergraduate* leading to a *degree* (in Art, BA or Science BSc). The next steps are Master's (MA or MSc) and Doctor's degrees (Ph.D).

Oxford, Cambridge, the University College of London and the Imperial College of London have been in the top 6 of the QS World Universities *rankings*, since its creation in 2010.

In 2010, 23% of adults in the UK had at least a bachelor degree qualification.