



BRITISH SOCIETY AND CULTURE

英国社会与文化

主编 王晓红

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前言

过去三十多年里,随着我国改革开放的日益深入和国际交流的不断扩大,人们不但对英语语言和文学的兴趣日渐浓厚,而且对英美文化的认识和研究也日益深入。越来越多的人认识到,如果不全面了解英美文化,就不可能真正掌握英语这门语言,也谈不上对英美文学的深入研究;在高校英语教学中,只注重语言知识和技能还远远不够,必须了解和研究英美文化知识。

基于这种认识,我们编写了这套“**英美社会与文化丛书**”。本丛书分为《**美国社会与文化**》和《**英国社会与文化**》两册,是一套关于美国和英国的社会与文化背景的教科书,旨在帮助高校英语专业学生和英语爱好者了解这两个国家的社会与文化概貌,开阔他们的视野,培养他们独立思考的精神和分析批判的能力,提高他们的英语水平和跨文化交际水平。

本丛书每册分别由十八章组成,内容涉及英国和美国社会与文化的各个层面,包括政治、经济、地理、教育、法律、宗教、文学、外交、价值观念、社会生活和文化传统等方面的基本知识。在每章课文后的注释中简要解释历史人物、重大事件、典故、语言难点和读者不易理解的词语。每章的开头有一至两篇汉语简介,起导读作用。每章后有若干思考题,还有一篇补充阅读材料,为读者提供更多的相关信息。此外,每章最后附有参考书目及相关网址,以方便读者学习和查阅。

本丛书具有以下几个特点:

第一,内容全面。本丛书概括地介绍了英美两国的社会和文化的各个方面,力争在有限的篇幅里比较全面地向读者展示比较真实的英国和美国,使读者在阅读过程中不仅扩大知识面和词汇量,而且在提高英语语言水平方面有所裨益,为他们日后进一步学习和研究英美文化打下良好的基础。

第二,材料新颖。本丛书注重历史与现实的结合,对一个专题既从历史的角度又从事物发展的角度进行介绍。例如,《**美国社会与文化**》一书中的第二单元简要介绍了 2008 年美国总统选举,第十一单元提到了 2008 年美国金融危机。

第三,文字规范。除了参考国内目前已出版的英美文化类书籍,丛书的许多内容从英美

原版图书、杂志中摘选,还有一部分资料网络。我们在选材时力求文字地道、规范、易懂,尽量做到知识性、权威性、趣味性、时效性并存。

本丛书是集体努力的成果。参加本丛书编写的成员有韩林焯、贺琳、李燕、马丽、孟利、仝楠、王博佳、王静、王晓红,均为西安外国语大学英文学院的英语教师。本册第二、四、五章由王静编写,第三、七章由王博佳编写,第六章由仝楠编写,第一、八、九、十章由韩林焯编写,第十一、十七章由李燕编写,第十二至十六章及十八章由贺琳编写。

本丛书既可用作高等学校英语专业英美文化的选修课教材,也可供具有同等英语水平的读者自学使用。

由于编者水平有限,丛中难免存在许多不足,恳请同行及读者不吝指正。

编 者

2010年5月

Table of Contents

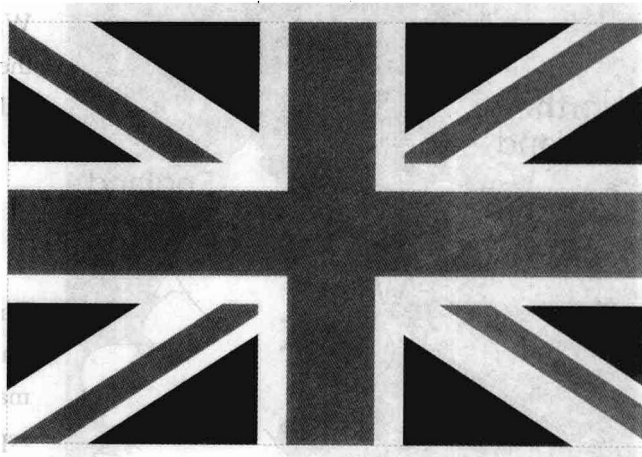
Chapter 1	The Country and the People	1
Chapter 2	The British Government	21
Chapter 3	Justice and the Law	36
Chapter 4	Political Parties and Groups	59
Chapter 5	Constitutional Monarchy and the Royal Family	76
Chapter 6	The British Economy	95
Chapter 7	Foreign Relations	114
Chapter 8	Social Welfare	128
Chapter 9	British Families	149
Chapter 10	Class Structure and Social Problems	171
Chapter 11	British Education	193
Chapter 12	British Media	212
Chapter 13	Holidays and Festivals	229
Chapter 14	British Social Customs	248
Chapter 15	Leisure and Tourism	262
Chapter 16	Values and Beliefs	278
Chapter 17	Work	293
Chapter 18	British Literature	312

Chapter 1

The Country and the People

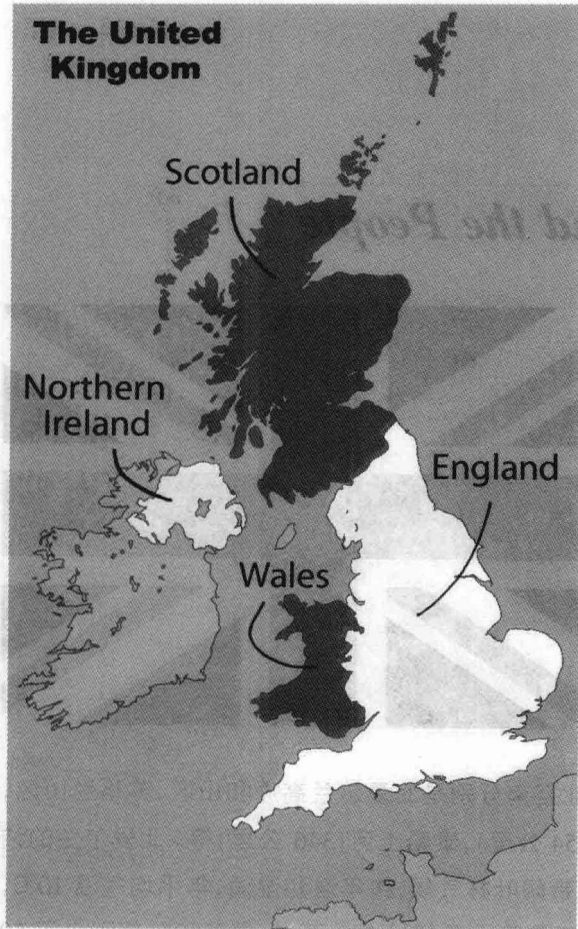
导 读 Introduction

英国全称大不列颠及北爱尔兰联合王国，位于欧洲大陆西北面的不列颠群岛，被北海、英吉利海峡、凯尔特海、爱尔兰海和大西洋所包围。联合王国由英格兰、苏格兰、威尔士、北爱尔兰及一系列附属岛屿组成。它的陆界与爱尔兰共和国接壤，海岸线总长 12 500 公里。从地形上看，由北至南分别是北爱尔兰高原和山区，苏格兰山区，中西部山区和英格兰东南部平原。主要河流有塞文河(354 公里)，泰晤士河(346 公里)等。北爱尔兰的讷湖面积(396 平方公里)居全国之首。全境属于海洋性温带阔叶林气候，终年温和湿润，年平均气温 10℃，冬季平均 5℃左右，夏季平均约 15℃。北部和西部的山区年降水量超过 200 厘米，中部和东部则少于 50 厘米。英国有储量丰富的煤，石油，天然气等自然资源。近年来，对新能源的开发和利用以及对自然环境的保护备受政府重视。英国人口总数约为 6 000 万左右，其中英格兰居住人口最多，占总人口的比重达 83.8%。首都伦敦，是英国居住人口最多，人口密度最大的城市。二战后，随着世界各地移民的到来，英国人口构成呈现多元化的发展趋势。英语仍然是大多数人口使用的主要语言。本章简要介绍英国的地理和人口概况。



"When people say England, they sometimes mean Great Britain, sometimes the United Kingdom, sometimes the British Isles, but never England." —How to be an Alien by George Mikes

The full and official name of the country is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which refers to the union of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Very often different names, correctly or incorrectly, are used to describe the country, such as the United Kingdom, the UK, Britain, Great Britain, and even England. The first three names are all acceptable, while the last two are not. In fact, as the largest island of the British Isles (a group of islands lying off the north-west coast of mainland Europe), Great Britain comprises England, Scotland, Wales, together with all the offshore islands. Great Britain and Northern Ireland together form the United Kingdom.



A map of the United Kingdom
 England Northern Ireland Scotland Wales

As for using the term “England” to refer to the UK, it is more unforgivable, for England is only one part of the country. Maybe because England is the largest, most populous part with dominant influence over the country, people tend to use “England” and “English” when they mean “Britain” and “British”. This, to some extent, offends people in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland who do not regard themselves as English and who have their own cultures and even their own languages.

I . Geography

In history, Britain used to be connected to the European continent, but the melting of the glaciers during the Ice Age caused the rising of the sea level, making it an island nation today. Britain is now separated from the continent by the North Sea at its widest point and by the English Channel at its narrowest which is just 35 km (22 miles) apart from France. It is also surrounded to the west by the Irish Sea, the Celtic Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.

The United Kingdom consists of two large islands as mentioned above, Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and several hundred small islands including the Isle of Wight, the Isles of the Scilly, the Hebrides, Orkney, and Shetlands. The mainland areas lie between latitudes 49°N and 59°N (Shetlands reach to nearly 61°N), and longitudes 8°W to 2°E. The only land border connecting the kingdom to another country is between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, which is 488 km (303 miles) long.

The total area of the United Kingdom is approximately 245,000 square kilometers (94,600 sq mi). England is the largest country of the United Kingdom, covering an area of 130,410 square kilometers (50,350 sq mi), which is over half the total area of the UK. Scotland, with an area of 78,772 square kilometers (30,410 sq mi), is the second largest, taking up about a third of the area of the UK. Wales and Northern Ireland are much smaller, covering 20,758 square kilometers (8,010 sq mi) and 14,160 square kilometers (5,470 sq mi) respectively.

Landscape

The landscape of the UK is very varied, roughly dividing the country into highland and lowland regions. High hills and mountains are more often found in the north and west; the rolling plains mainly concentrate in the south and east. Ben Nevis in Scotland, 4406 feet (1343m) high, is the highest mountain of the UK. The highest elevations can be found in the south-west (Dartmoor and Exmoor),



and the Pennine mountains of north-central England; the Cambrian mountains of Wales; the central areas of Northern Ireland; and the southern uplands, Grampian mountains, and north-west highlands of Scotland. The rest of the UK mainly consists of plains and lowlands, especially in the east and south of England.

England

England occupies the central and southern two-thirds of Great Britain including offshore islands. It is bordered to the north by Scotland and to the west by Wales.

Different types of rock under the ground determine the landscape of England. Chalk made the gently

rolling hills of South Downs, and hard granite provides the foundation for the mountains of the north and the moorlands of Dartmoor and Exmoor in the Southwest.

Much of the land in England is flat and low-lying—less than 1,000m above sea level. Thus large areas of meadowlands, pastures and woodlands can be found across England, especially in the east.

The north of England is categorized into the upland area, where a chain of hills between 600 and 900 meters in height, the Pennines, divides northern England into northwest and northeast sectors. The Pennines is also called the upland “spine” of England, running down from the Scottish border to the river Trent about halfway down the length of England. The highest point of England, Scafell Pike (978m), part of the Cumbrian Mountains, is located in northwest England. The area of the Cumbrian Mountains is the rockiest part in England and is more commonly known as the Lake District, which is famous for its lakes and scenic beauty.

The southwest of England is a long peninsular, featuring desolate moorlands and rough areas. It is also home to the moorland plateaus of Dartmoor and Exmoor, and many picturesque valleys. The central part of southern England is mainly covered by the vast stretches of Salisbury Plain, which is a chalk plateau covering 780 square kilometers and having Stonehenge on it as one of the best-known landmarks in England. The east of England is characterized by its flatness, with the Fenlands in East Anglia; it is also an important agricultural base.

Scotland

Scotland consists of the northern one-third of the Great Britain and more than 790 surrounding islands. It has very diverse terrains, ranging from rural lowlands to barren uplands, and from large cities to isolated islands. The land is generally divided into three regions: the Highlands in the north, the central Lowlands, and the southern Uplands.

The Highlands, covering 60 per cent of northwest Scotland, are extensive mountainous areas with the maximum height of around 1,300 m. The Great Glen, a series of glens running 100 kilometers from Fort William to Inverness, cuts the area into the Grampian Mountains to the southeast and the Northwest Highlands to the northwest. Glens in Scotland are usually steep-sided valleys, with a long and narrow loch at the bottom.

The Grampian Mountains are the highest on the British Isles, having Ben Nevis as the tallest peak. Ben Lomond, at 3,192 feet (973m), rises from the shore of Loch Lomond, Scotland's largest freshwater loch. The Northwest Highlands have great sea lochs, large lakes, wild and rough hills.

The central Lowlands are characterized by fertile soil, coal and iron fields and dairy pastures. Located in this region, the Firth of Clyde in the west and the Firth of Forth in the east provide valuable outlets to the sea. It is also the main farming district in Scotland and boasts several large cities, including Edinburgh and Glasgow, and 90 per cent of Scottish population.

The southern Uplands have hills less than 2,000 feet (600 meters) high, which are often cut by broad valleys. Some of the most remote and least inhabited areas in Scotland are also located here. It is home to Scotland's highest village, Wanlockhead, at 1,531 feet (467 meters).

Wales

Wales comprises a peninsula in the central west of Great Britain and offshore islands. It is bounded on the north by Liverpool Bay, on the west by Cardigan Bay, and on the south by the Bristol Channel. In the east Wales borders England.

Most parts of Wales are covered by mountains. There are three mountainous regions in particular: Snowdonia in the northwest, the Cambrian Mountains in mid Wales, and the Brecon Beacons in the south. In fact, the Cambrian Mountains are a series of mountain ranges, stretching from the south Wales mountains of the Brecon Beacons, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, to Snowdonia in north Wales. The name of Snowdonia comes from the mountain Snowdon in the area, which is the highest point in Wales at 1,085 meters (3,560ft). The Brecon Beacons reach a height of 886 meters (2,906ft). Along the English border are smaller ranges, including the Berwin Mountains, Beacon Hill, Radnor Forest, and the Black Mountains.

The lowland area is confined mainly to the narrow coastal belts and the valley floors; the lowland region of southeastern Wales contains the largest cities and industrial establishments in Wales.

Wales also boasts many waterfalls, including some of the most striking waterfalls of United Kingdom. The highest and most famous waterfall in Wales is Pistyll Rhaeadr at 75 meters (240 ft). The name of the fall is Welsh, meaning "spring of the waterfall" and it is located near the village of Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant. It is also counted as one of the Seven Wonders of Wales. The 19th century English author George Borrow wrote that "I never saw water falling so gracefully, so much like thin, beautiful threads, as here."

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland takes up about one-sixth of the island of Ireland and is separated on the east from Scotland, by the narrow North Channel, which is at one point only 13 miles (21 km) wide. The Irish Sea separates Northern Ireland from England and Wales on the east and southeast, respectively, and the Atlantic Ocean lies to the north. The southern and western borders are with the Republic of Ireland.

The land is shaped like a saucer, featuring low central plains surrounded by a ring of coastal mountains. The central lowlands are characterized by rolling hills, marshy hollows, peat bogs and river valleys. The Antrim Plateau rises in the northeast, the Sperrin Mountains in the northwest, and the Mourne Mountains in the southeast. The highest point is Slieve Donard, rising to 2,796 feet (852 meters) in the Mourne Mountains in County Down. Near the center of the province lies Lough Neagh, the largest lake in the British Isles.

Lakes and Rivers

Thanks to its moist climate with adequate rainfall, the UK is home to many lakes and rivers. Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland, the largest lake in the UK, covers an area of 396 sq km (153 sq miles). Loch Lomond in Scotland, the largest on the island of Great Britain, extends about 24 miles (39km), widening south in the shape of a triangle. Among the 15 major lakes in the English Lake District, Windermere is the largest, which is 10.5 miles (17 km) long and 1 mile (1.6 km) wide and has an area of 6 square miles (16 square km). Another of Scotland's lakes, Loch Ness is famous for a mythical "monster" ("Nessie").

The River Severn is the longest river in the UK, which is almost 220 miles (354 km) in length. It originates from the Cambrian Mountains of mid-Wales and discharges into the British Channel, which finally flows into the Atlantic Ocean. It is also one of the ten major rivers in the UK in terms of water flow.

The River Thames, 215 miles (346 km) is the second longest river in the UK and the longest one in England. It rises in Cotswold Hills, flows through the capital city of London and finally discharges into

the North Sea; other cities on Thames include Oxford, Reading and Windsor. The river has special significance; for centuries it has provided habitation, water power, food and drink for people living in London and other places on its course.

As an important river in Scotland, the River Clyde, 171 kilometers long, rises in Dumfries and flows through Glasgow and finally enters the Firth of Clyde. It played a key role in the development of shipbuilding industry and foreign trade before the Second World War.

Coastline

In comparison to its area, the UK has a long coastline, which is around 12,500 kilometers (7760 miles) and offers some of the best scenery in Britain. England has a coastline of about 3,200 kilometers. The coastline is rocky with steep cliffs in the south and west, while the east coast is flat and low lying, with beaches and mud flats.

Scotland has an irregular and deeply indented coastline, at the length of about 3,700 kilometers (2,300 miles). The rugged western coast, in particular, is pierced by numerous inlets from the sea. Most of these inlets are narrow submerged valleys with steep sides, known as sea lochs. The larger and broader inlets are called firths. The principal firths are the Firth of Lorne, the Firth of Clyde (see Clyde), and Solway Firth. On the eastern coast, there are Dornoch Firth, Moray Firth, the Firth of Tay, and the Firth of Forth. The majority of British islands (approximately 790) are located off shore from Scotland; three main groups of islands are the Hebrides, the Orkney Islands and the Shetland Islands.

Northern Ireland has rugged and wild coastline in the north and the west, with many islands, peninsulas and bays. The island is divided by the River Shannon, which at 259 km (161 miles) is the longest river in Ireland and flows south to meet the Atlantic. The seashores are rocky, but deep inlets provide excellent harbors. On the northern coast of the country rises the striking natural formation called the Giant's Causeway, which is made up of thousands of columns of basalt rock.

Climate

The UK is in the temperate climate zone and does not have extremes of temperature or rainfall. The main influence on its climate is the close proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, the northern latitude, and the warming of the waters around the land by the Gulf Stream (a warm current of the northern Atlantic Ocean). Being surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the West, the English Channel to the south, and the North Sea to the east, the UK, a small island country, is more influenced by the ocean than other European countries. The Gulf Stream, also known as the North Atlantic Drift, is the main ocean current that affects Britain and warms it by 5-8°C. The average annual temperature in Britain is about 10°C, with the summer average temperature being around 15°C and the winter average being around 5°C.

There are also climatic differences throughout the UK. The coldest winter temperatures in the country occur in eastern Scotland and England. The western side of Britain is warmed by the influence of the tropical maritime airstreams. Therefore, during winter temperatures are colder in the east than in the west. During summer the south is warmer than the north. This is due to the differences in solar heat received, being greater in the south.

The British climate can be generally divided into four parts. The northwest region is featured by mild winters and cool summers and the northeast with cold winters and cool summers. The southwest experiences mild winters and warm summers and the southeast has cold winters and warm summers. Western parts of Britain generally experience a more maritime climate during winter while eastern Britain

is influenced by the cold airstreams from the European continent. In summer, climate differences are more determined by latitude.

The country is also well-known for its variable and changeable weather from day to day. Therefore, visitors to the UK should be prepared for rapid changes of weather at all seasons and realize that there is good reason for weather being a major talking point in Britain.

The south and southeast of England receive the longest hours of sunshine in average, and the north and west receive the least. Western Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland have much less sunshine than most of England. In the UK, daily sunshine hours range from between one and two in midwinter to between five and seven in midsummer. Because of frequent fogs and low clouds, winter sunshine is much reduced. This is a consequence of winds from the Atlantic and seas surrounding the UK, which bring high humidity. For the same reason, British mountains are particularly cloudy and wet.

Precipitation also varies throughout the country. The west of the UK, especially the parts on higher ground, receives considerable rainfall. Parts of Scotland can receive over 250cm or 100inches of precipitation annually. The east of the UK, especially southeastern parts, receives much less rainfall. Areas of the southeast may receive only 50cm or 20inches of precipitation each year. Much of the eastern areas lie in the rain shadow of hills and mountains such as the Lake District, the Peak District and the Scottish Highlands with annual rainfall exceeding 150cm or 60inches and in places reaching as much as 500cm or 200inches. These are among the wettest places in Europe.

Snow may occur anywhere in Britain in winter or even spring but, except on the hills, it rarely lies for more than a few days. In some winters there may be very little snow, but every fifteen or twenty years it may lie for some weeks during a prolonged cold spell.

Natural Resources

The UK is endowed with significant supplies of coal, natural gas and oil. Large deposits of coal, mined for more than 300 years, were found in areas such as the north of England, the south of Wales and the central Scotland. Coal was the country's richest natural resource for most of the last two centuries, being one of the primary energy resources for the industrial development. However, coal production has declined rapidly since 1970s when Britain was the world's third largest producer of coal. Only 35 million tons of coal was produced in the year 2000, compared with 145 million in 1970. It now accounts for just 16 per cent of British energy consumption, down from 30 per cent in 1990, and it is largely used as a fuel for generating electricity.

Britain has been a major producer in oil and natural gas since they were discovered in the North Sea in the 1960s. The 1970s and the 1980s were the peak time of oil production. As the North Sea's oil reserves have been depleted, the oil output has declined steadily since 1999 and this trend will continue in the following years. In June 2004, Britain became the net importer of oil for the first time in decade. Natural gas is the country's biggest source of primary energy, accounting for 40 per cent of needs. As the world's fourth biggest producer of natural gas, the UK is estimated to be self-sufficient of natural gas well into the century.

Today, renewable energy including solar, wind and geothermal power are increasingly drawing the government's and the public's attention; they are expected to eventually replace the coal, oil and gas-fired

power stations in the future.

Although Britain has limited land area, agriculture in Britain has long been among the most technologically advanced and productive in the world. Its highly mechanized and efficient agriculture provides about two-thirds of the country's food needs by employing no more than 2% of the labor force. It contributes over 1 per cent of Britain's gross domestic product. Due to the differences in relief, climate, and soil type etc., different types of agricultural production can be found in different regions throughout the country. Half of Britain's farms focus on dairy farming, sheep and cattle-raising, most of which are located in the northern, western and south-eastern parts in the UK and contribute about one-third to the country's agricultural output. The other half engage in poultry, egg production and crop production such as wheat, barley, oats and vegetables. Crop farms are mainly in the eastern and central-southern England.

The Environment

With the rapid pace of industrial development and population growth, environmental protection has been a major concern in the UK. In the past, the country was once notorious for its severe air pollution; the term "smog" was invented to describe the combination of smoke and fog that once polluted the air over major industrial cities, especially London. This is no longer the case in today's Britain; air and water are cleaner than at any time since the beginning of industrial development.

Since 1950s, British government began to take measures to clean the air. The Clean Air Act, passed in 1955, was a major attempt to reduce industrial pollution. What's more, the increased use of gas and electricity as a replacement for coal as a primary source of energy further reduced air pollution. Between the 1980s and 1990s, real progress was made in this area: nitrogen oxide emissions, mainly from road traffic, decreased by one-third in 2002 compared with that in 1989, which is expected to drop further by 70 per cent until 2015; sulphur dioxide emissions, mainly from power stations, have been cut down by 80 per cent since 1970 and carbon monoxide emissions have been reduced by 50 per cent; carbon dioxide emissions dropped by almost 15 per cent between 1990 and 2004.

In addition to the efforts of air-pollution control, the area of protected land in the country has increased significantly since the World War II. At present, there are 14 national parks in the UK with 9 in England, 3 in Wales and 2 in Scotland. There are also 42 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 40 National Scenic Areas in Scotland, 17 forest parks, more than 200 regional parks and smaller protected areas. Altogether, they cover more than 20 per cent of the land area of the UK.

Like all other EU member states, now the UK mainly follows the environmental regulations and standards set by the European Union on environmental quality. Therefore, sustainable development, that is to improve the quality of water and air, improve the use of chemicals and pesticides, reduce waste, conserve energy, and manage forests and fisheries etc., has become the main objective for the UK.

II. Population

According to the latest census in 2001, the total population of the United Kingdom was 58,789,194—ranking the third in the European Union (following Germany and France) and the 21st in the world. This figure has grown to 60,587,300 in mid-2006 estimated by the Office for National Statistics of the UK.

Part	Population (mid-2006)	% (mid-2006)
England	50,762,900	83.8
Scotland	5,116,900	8.4
Wales	2,965,900	4.9
Northern Ireland	1,741,600	2.9
United Kingdom	60,587,300	100

(1 July 2006 population estimates by UK National Statistics)

The annual rate of population growth in the UK has been declining for years and currently it is about 0.6 per cent. The British population is expected to keep growing slowly. By the year 2040, it is estimated to peak at 66 million and then begin to fall.

Rising immigration is believed to be the main reason for the population growth. Statistics released by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in the UK show that in the year of 2005, the British population grew 185,000 due to immigration, which represents an increase of 500 people per day.

Population Density

The average population density in the UK is about 250 people per sq km, one of the highest in the world. England is the most densely populated part in the country with the population density of more than 380 people per sq km, which means nearly 84 per cent of British population reside in England. Less than 9 per cent of the British population settle in Scotland, with a population density of 65 people per sq km. Wales has about 5 per cent of the total population and a population density of 139 people per sq km. Northern Ireland accounts for less than 3 per cent of the population in the UK with a population density of 121 people per sq km.

London, the capital city of the UK, occupies an area of over 1,580 square kilometers and has a population of over 7 million, making it the most populous city in the European Union. It is also one of the European Union's most densely settled areas; only Copenhagen, Brussels and Paris are more densely populated.

The information below has been taken from the 2001 Census. A census of the British population has been taken every 10 years since 1801. The next census will be in 2011.

Rank	City	Part	Area	Population (2001 Census)
1	London	England	1,580 km ² (620 mi ²)	7,172,091
2	Birmingham	England	283 km ² (109 mi ²)	970,892
3	Leeds	England	552 km ²	715,404
4	Glasgow	Scotland	177 km ² (68 mi ²)	577,869
5	Sheffield	England		513,234
6	Bradford	England		467,665
7	Edinburgh	Scotland	260 km ² (100 mi ²)	448,624
8	Liverpool	England		439,477
9	Manchester	England		392,819
10	Bristol	England		380,615
11	Cardiff	Wales		305,353
12	Coventry	England	97 km ² (37 mi ²)	300,848

Source: Office for National Statistics (2001).

Population Structure

As for the age structure, the 2001 census shows that the three largest age groups are: the group of 50-55 years old (born between 1946 and 1951 during the post-World War II baby boom), 35-40 years old, and 10-15 years old. The percentages of males and females in age groups of 0-14 and 15-64 are the same: 9 per cent and 33 per cent respectively. However, due to the higher mortality of men with increasing age, males in the age group of 65+ account for only 7 per cent of the total population, while it is 9 per cent for females.

The age and gender distribution of the population in 2001 is shown below:

Age group	Population		%
	Male	Female	
0-14	5,560,489	5,293,871	18.0
15-64	20,193,876	19,736,516	66.3
65+	4,027,721	5,458,235	15.7

Source: Office for National Statistics (2001).

Ethnic Composition

In close proximity to the European continent, the United Kingdom was once subject to many invasions and migrations in history, especially from Scandinavia and the continent, including Roman occupation for several centuries. Therefore, British people are believed to be descended from the varied ethnic groups that settled in Great Britain before the 11th century; the Pre-historic, Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Norse and the Normans. From the Middle Ages to Early Modern Period (roughly the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries), a succession of wars and conquests, separations and unions facilitated migration and intermarriage between the people of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. As a consequence, the lands were largely inhabited by English, Scots, Irish and Welsh people. Meanwhile, considerable numbers of foreigners and refugees came to settle in Britain for economic, political or religious reasons. For instance, in the 17th century Protestant French came to Britain seeking for religious refuge; groups of African sailors immigrated to the country in the 18th century.

Since the 19th century, particularly since the World War II of the last century, substantial immigration from the Commonwealth, Europe and the rest of the world has changed the ethnic make-up in the United Kingdom. Non-whites have grown from tens of thousands in 1951 to 4.6 million in 2001. The total number of ethnic minorities (including whites from ethnic minority groups) in 2001 was 6,751,689.

After the World War II, citizens from member countries of the old British Empire and Commonwealth were granted the right of entry to Britain. Labor shortages in the 1950s also encouraged employers to recruit immigrant workers from Commonwealth countries. Consequently, large numbers of immigrants continuously arrived from the Caribbean, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Many Jews arrived in Britain toward the end of the 19th century. Meanwhile, large numbers of other European refugees settled in the country. The large immigrant communities from the West Indies and South Asia date from the 1950s and 1960s. There are also substantial groups of Americans, Australians, and Chinese, as well as various other Europeans, such as Greeks, Russians, Poles, Serbs, Estonians,

Latvians, Armenians, Turkish Cypriots, Italians, and Spaniards. Beginning in the early 1970s, Ugandan Asians (expelled by Idi Amin) and immigrants from Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Sri Lanka have sought refuge in Britain. These immigrations have greatly added to the ethnic diversity in the UK. Today, the number of non-whites living in the country has increased from 0.2 per cent of the population (about 75-100,000) in 1945 to about 7.9 per cent of the population (about 4.7 million).

The average number of immigrants coming from other EU member states every year grew from 71,000 to 89,000 during the 1990s. Generally speaking, people come to Britain in search of better economic opportunities or improved life quality. Since the EU enlargement in 2004, the number of workers from Eastern Europe in the UK has increased dramatically. Immigrants from the ten new member states of the EU constituted an estimated 80 per cent of the increase in net inflows to Britain in 2003-04. The largest single inflow of immigrants came from Poland with 57,000 arriving in 2005.

According to the findings in the 2001 British Census, over 92 per cent of the population was classified as white; therefore, it is safe to say that the UK today is still a predominantly white nation. Nearly 8 per cent of the population (about 5 million people) belongs to an ethnic minority. Indians, the largest ethnic minority group in the UK, made up 1.8 per cent of the total population. Pakistanis ranked the second, accounting for 1.3 per cent of the total population; Caribbeans, 1 per cent; Africans, 0.8 per cent; Bangladeshis, 0.5 per cent and Chinese, 0.4 per cent.

Most of ethnic minority groups reside in urban and industrial areas, especially in major cities of England such as London, Birmingham, Coventry, Manchester, Leicester etc. According to a survey in 2005, more than 50 non-indigenous communities with a population of more than 10,000 live in London. And in 2008, 40 per cent of London's total population was from an ethnic minority group. In addition, almost 50 per cent of all the people of ethnic minority origin in the UK live in Greater London; 27.1 per cent of Greater London's population was born outside the UK shown by the 2001 census.

Pakistani population mainly concentrates in West Midlands, Greater London, Yorkshire and the North West, with Birmingham having the largest population of 105,000 in 2005. In comparison, Chinese population of over 400,000 in 2006 is more widespread. Chinese communities can be found in a number of major cities including London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Sheffield, Belfast and Aberdeen. Scotland and Northern Ireland have much fewer people from ethnic minorities.

Since 1960s and 1970s, a series of laws, including The Race Relations Act of 1976, have been made to protect the rights of ethnic minority groups in the UK, which make it illegal to discriminate against anyone on the basis of race. And the Commission for Racial Equality is the organization to which anyone who felt that they had been the target of discrimination could appeal. Though the social atmosphere in the United Kingdom is generally stable and peaceful, there are occasional incidents of racial unrest and conflict, especially in crowded and impoverished urban neighborhood. In April 1993, a black teenager named Stephen Lawrence was beaten to death by a group of white teenagers in south-east London. This incident led to the passage of 1998 legislation, which introduces new assault, harassment and public-order offenses and applies higher penalties if those offenses are race-related. Tensions heightened again in July 2005 after four young British Muslims carried out the suicide bombings of three underground trains and a bus in London. Though the bombings were linked to Britain's participation in the US-Iraq War, there were calls for a tightening of British immigration policy.