

Population and language



The current population of the United Kingdom is about 68,600,000 based on the United Nations estimates. It is equivalent to 0.87% of the total world population and the UK ranks number 21 in the list of countries by population.

The population density is 281 per Km² and the total land area is Km² 241,959. 83.2 % of the population is urban and the median age is 40.5 years.

According to the last Census in 2021, the majority of the usual resident population is White with 87.1%. People of Asian origin are 6.9% and Black people are 3%.

A timeline of the English Language

Old English (700-1100 AD) derived from a West Saxon dialect and became the literary standard. Without words from French and Latin origin it was different from Modern English, although common words (*mann*=man or *hus*=house) can be easily recognised.

Middle English (1100-1450) developed from a London dialect, and was made popular by Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. New words were brought by the Normans.

Early Modern English (1450-about 1800) was different, although similar to the English spoken today. At the time of Shakespeare there was no agreement on spelling rules and the same word could be written in different ways. Towards the 15th century many vowel sounds became diphthongs, a phenomenon called the Great Vowel Shift (e.g. *hus* became house).

Modern English (from about 1800) has enriched its vocabulary with words from foreign countries. There are regional varieties, but the *Received Pronunciation* or *Queen's English* was the language of the public schools in the 19th century. In the 1930s and 40s it was adopted by the BBC and became BBC English.

Standard British English (SBE) was promoted in schools. Nowadays, regional varieties are accepted and people have developed a mixed accent called **Modified RP**.

Estuary English developed in the 1990s from the speech of London.



The current population of the United States of America is about 335,000,000 based on the United Nations estimates. It is equivalent to 4.25% of the total world population and the USA rank number 3 in the list of countries by population.

The population density is 36 per Km² and the total land area is Km² 9,155,898.

82.8% of the population is urban and the median age is 38.3 years.

According to the last Census in 2020, the most important ethnic groups in the USA are: White (non Hispanic) (57.8%), Black (12.2%), Asian (5.6%), Amerindian and Alaska Native (0.97%), native Hawaiian and Pacific islander (0.6%), other groups (2.8%).

The Hispanic population is counted separately and is about 18.9% of the total US population.

American English

There are regional varieties, but the standard is called **General American**. **Black English**, or Ebonics, is quite different from the standard.

American English versus British English

The biggest differences between American and British English are in pronunciation and vocabulary.

There are a few minor grammar differences between American and British English: in past simple and present perfect usage with words such as *just* and *already*, as well as a few past participles such as *gotten* in American English and *got* in British English. There are also a few minor spelling differences.

AMERICAN ENGLISH	BRITISH ENGLISH
-or (e.g. color)	-our (e.g. colour)
-er (e.g. center)	-re (e.g. centre)
-m (e.g. program)	-mme (e.g. programme)
-g (e.g. catalog)	-gue (e.g. catalogue)
final "l" in verbs = no doubling (e.g. traveler)	final "l" in verbs = doubling (e.g. traveller)





 **1** Look at the table and answer the questions.

1. What does it represent?
2. What is the trend for population?
3. What is the trend for migration?
4. What is happening to the median age?
5. What about urbanisation?

Population of the United Kingdom

Year	Population	Migrants (net)	Median Age	Urban population
2020	67,886,011	260,650	40.5	56,495,180
2019	67,530,172	260,650	40.1	56,012,276
2018	67,141,684	260,650	40.1	55,521,226
2017	66,727,461	260,650	40.1	55,025,421
2016	66,297,944	260,046	40.0	54,529,375

(source: worldometers.info)


 **2** Look at the table and answer the questions.

1. What does it represent?
2. What is the trend for population?
3. What is the trend for migration?
4. What is happening to the median age?
5. What about urbanisation?

Population of the USA

Year	Population	Migrants (net)	Median Age	Urban population
2020	331,002,651	954,806	38.3	273,975,139
2019	329,064,917	954,806	37.7	271,365,914
2018	327,096,265	954,806	37.7	268,786,714
2017	325,084,756	954,806	37.7	266,243,516
2016	323,015,995	954,806	37.7	263,743,312

(source: worldometers.info)

 **3** Compare the trends of the UK and the USA population using the notes from the previous activity. Refer to the phraseology section of unit 1 for help. Then, write a text of about 150 words comparing the two tables.




Follow this structure:

Introduction: define the topic of the tables

Body: describe and compare the trends for population, migrants, median age and urban population. Find differences and similarities.

Conclusion: interpret the data

 **4** Read and listen to a series of sentences both in British and American English and find any differences in grammar, vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation.

	British English	American English	differences
1	Have you got a bottle of water?	Do you have a bottle of water?	
2	I have just had a shower.	I just took a shower.	
3	I neither like the sound nor the tune of your mobile.	I neither like the sound nor the tune of your mobile.	
4	This land is fertile.	This land is fertile.	
5	I want to go to the town centre to buy some biscuits.	I wanna go downtown to buy some cookies.	