

# Scotland

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Scotland is a country that is part of the United Kingdom. It contains nearly one-third of the United Kingdom's land area, consisting of the northern part of the island of Great Britain and more than 790 adjacent islands, principally in the archipelagos of the Hebrides and the Northern Isles. In 2022, the country's population was about 5.4 million. Its capital city is Edinburgh, whilst Glasgow is the largest city and the most populous of the cities of Scotland. To the south-east, Scotland has its only land border, which is 96 miles (154 km) long and shared with England; the country is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the north and west, the North Sea to the north-east and east, and the Irish Sea to the south. The legislature, the Scottish Parliament, elects 129 MSPs to represent 73 constituencies...

## Subdivisions of Scotland

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For local government purposes, Scotland is divided into 32 areas designated as "council areas" (Scottish Gaelic: comhairlean), which are all governed by single-tier authorities designated as "councils". They have the option under the Local Government (Gaelic Names) (Scotland) Act 1997 of being known (but not re-designated) as a "comhairle" when opting for a Gaelic name; only Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Council of the Western Isles) has chosen this option, whereas the Highland Council (Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd) has adopted its Gaelic form alongside its English equivalent, informally.

The council areas have been in existence since 1 April 1996, under the provisions of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994. Historically, Scotland was divided into 34 counties or shires. Although these...

## Politics of Scotland

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The politics of Scotland (Scottish Gaelic: Poilitigs na h-Alba) operate within the constitution of the United Kingdom, of which Scotland is a country. Scotland is a democracy, being represented in both the Scottish Parliament and the Parliament of the United Kingdom since the Scotland Act 1998. Most executive power is exercised by the Scottish Government, led by the first minister of Scotland, the head of government in a multi-party system. The judiciary of Scotland, dealing with Scots law, is independent of the legislature and the Scottish Government, and is headed by the Lord Advocate who is the principal legal adviser to the Scottish Government. Scots law is primarily determined by the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Government shares limited executive powers, notably over reserved matters...

## Church of Scotland

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The Church of Scotland (CoS; Scots: The Kirk o Scotland; Scottish Gaelic: Eaglais na h-Alba) is a Presbyterian denomination of Christianity that holds the status of the national church in Scotland. It is one of

the country's largest, having 245,000 members in 2024 and 259,200 members in 2023. While membership in the church has declined significantly in recent decades (in 1982 it had nearly 920,000 members), the government Scottish Household Survey concluded that 20% of the Scottish population, or over one million people, identified the Church of Scotland as their religious identity in 2019.

In the 2022 census, 20.4% of the Scottish population, or 1,108,796 adherents, identified the Church of Scotland as their religious identity. The Church of Scotland's governing system is presbyterian in...

## Secretary of State for Scotland

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The secretary of state for Scotland (Scottish Gaelic: Rùnaire Stàite na h-Alba; Scots: Secretar o State fir Scotland), also referred to as the Scottish secretary, is a secretary of state in the Government of the United Kingdom, with responsibility for the Scotland Office. The incumbent is a member of the Cabinet of the United Kingdom. The Secretary of State for Scotland serves as the custodian of the Scottish devolution settlement as outlined in the Scotland Act 1998, and represent Scottish interests within the UK Government as well as advocate for UK Government policies in Scotland. The secretary of state for Scotland is additionally responsible for partnership between the UK Government and the Scottish Government, as well as relations between the Parliament of the United Kingdom and the Scottish...

## Bank of Scotland

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The Bank of Scotland plc (Scottish Gaelic: Banca na h-Alba) is a commercial and clearing bank based in Edinburgh, Scotland, and is part of the Lloyds Banking Group. The bank was established by the Parliament of Scotland in 1695 to develop Scotland's trade with other countries, and aimed to create a stable banking system in the country. It was the first bank to be established in Scotland, and is the oldest operational bank in the country, the ninth oldest bank in continuous operation globally, as well as the longest continuous issuer of banknotes in the world.

With a history dating to the end of the 17th century, the Bank of Scotland was the first bank to have been established in Scotland, and, it is the fifth-oldest extant bank in the United Kingdom (the Bank of England having been established...

## Police Scotland

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Police Scotland (Scottish Gaelic: Poileas Alba), officially the Police Service of Scotland (Seirbheis Phoilis na h-Alba), is the national police force of Scotland. It was formed in 2013, through the merging of eight regional police forces in Scotland, as well as the specialist services of the Scottish Police Services Authority, including the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency. Although not formally absorbing it, the merger also resulted in the winding down of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland.

Police Scotland is the second-largest police force in the United Kingdom (after the Metropolitan Police) in terms of officer numbers, and by far the largest territorial police force in terms of its geographic area of responsibility. The chief constable is answerable to the Scottish...

## Peerage of Scotland

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The Peerage of Scotland (Scottish Gaelic: Moraireachd na h-Alba; Scots: Peerage o Scotland) is one of the five divisions of peerages in the United Kingdom and for those peers created by the King of Scotland before 1707. Following that year's Treaty of Union, the Kingdom of Scotland and the Kingdom of England were combined under the name of Great Britain, and a new Peerage of Great Britain was introduced in which subsequent titles were created.

Scottish peers were entitled to sit in the ancient Parliament of Scotland. After the Union, the peers of the old Parliament of Scotland elected 16 Scottish representative peers to sit in the House of Lords at Westminster. The Peerage Act 1963 granted all Scottish peers the right to sit in the House of Lords, but this automatic right was revoked, as for...

## Transport in Scotland

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Transport in Scotland is facilitated by road, rail, air and water networks. The Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament has control over most elements of transport policy within Scotland, with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport holding portfolio responsibility within the Scottish Government. Transport Scotland is the Executive Agency responsible for the Scottish transport network.

The country has five international airports of which Edinburgh Airport is the busiest, handling in excess of 12 million passengers annually. With over 790 islands lying off the Scottish coast, ferry services are primarily operated by Caledonian MacBrayne, a subsidiary of David MacBrayne which is owned by the Scottish Government. Caledonian Maritime Assets is the owner of the ferries, ports, harbours and infrastructure...

## Unionism in Scotland

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Unionism in Scotland (Scottish Gaelic: Aonachas) is a political movement which favours the continuation of the political union between Scotland and the other countries of the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), and hence is opposed to Scottish independence. Scotland is one of four countries of the United Kingdom which has its own devolved government and Scottish Parliament, as well as representation in the UK Parliament. There are many strands of political Unionism in Scotland, some of which have ties to Unionism and Loyalism in Northern Ireland. The two main political parties in the UK — the Conservatives and Labour — both support Scotland remaining part of the UK.

The Scottish unionism movement consists of many factions with varying political views but which are united in...

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