




The Commonwealth

Our Story,
Our World

Our
Commonwealth

The story of 53 countries



Hello, did you know that about 30% of the world's people live in the Commonwealth? That's nearly two and a half billion adults and children!



The people of the Commonwealth are a diverse group. Some live in very small islands like Nauru in the Pacific, and some live in big countries like India in Asia.


Introducing the Commonwealth



The Commonwealth is a vibrant family of 53 countries spread across every continent and ocean.



All countries in the Commonwealth are independent and equal nations.



Commonwealth people work together by sharing ideas and experiences, skills and knowledge.



It is about friendship and respect between individuals and nations.

Commonwealth values

The Commonwealth believes people have rights, such as the right to education and healthcare.



The Commonwealth stands against intolerance, prejudice and racism.



The Commonwealth regards girls and boys as equally important and aims to improve the lives of young men and women.



The Commonwealth promotes democracy and believes everyone should be free to choose their leaders.



The Commonwealth story

The early years

In the beginning...

The Commonwealth was born out of the British Empire, which at one time included countries in Asia, Africa, the Pacific, the Caribbean and the Americas.



Ghana became a member in **1957**. It was the first of many African countries to join the Commonwealth as independent nations in the 1950s and 1960s.

In **1931** it was called the British Commonwealth of Nations, but in 1949 leaders decided to transform it into an organisation of 'free and equal members', and the modern Commonwealth was created.



Marlborough House

The Commonwealth Secretariat encourages members to get together to talk about their concerns and ideas.

In **1961** South Africa left the Commonwealth because of its policy of segregating white and black people. Commonwealth leaders supported the struggle against white minority rule.

In **1965** the Commonwealth Secretariat was created. It is based in Marlborough House in London to promote shared values across member countries.

The 90s and beyond



In **1994** South Africa returned to the Commonwealth as a multi-racial and democratic country, under the leadership of Nelson Mandela.

In the **1990s** countries like Namibia, Cameroon and Mozambique, which were never part of the British Empire, also joined.

Many other countries, big and small, from all parts of the globe and with different cultures, languages and faiths are now part of the Commonwealth. In **2018**, The Gambia rejoined the Commonwealth, almost five years after leaving the organisation.

Although the Commonwealth Secretariat is based in the UK, people who work there come from all parts of the Commonwealth.



The Secretariat is led by Secretary-General Patricia Scotland, the first woman to hold the post.



The Head of the Commonwealth is Queen Elizabeth II. She is also Head of State for 16 Commonwealth member countries. Other countries are republics or have their own monarch.



About 60% of the people in the Commonwealth are under 30 years old. The Commonwealth Youth Council helps young people to work together and share their ideas with decision makers.



DID YOU KNOW?

Diversity and unity in the Commonwealth



The people of the Commonwealth are from many races and religions.

Some large countries like Australia, which has a population of more than 24 million, are sparsely populated.



Some smaller countries like Bangladesh, where over 160 million people live, are very densely populated.



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Thirty-one Commonwealth countries are 'small states' – usually with populations of less than 1.5 million.




Commonwealth countries also have many things in common. Most use the English language, have similar laws and support democracy as a form of government.



Hundreds of languages are represented in this community of 53 countries.



Helping Commonwealth countries



The Commonwealth has many programmes that assist member countries.

For example, the Commonwealth Secretariat helps countries look for solutions to economic and environmental problems. This includes climate change, which causes rising sea levels, violent storms and widespread devastation.

The Commonwealth also encourages member countries to care about human rights, which means ensuring that people are treated fairly and enjoy basic freedoms.

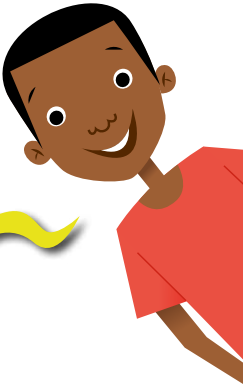


HUMAN
RIGHTS

The Commonwealth Secretariat gives small countries the opportunity to make contributions to global meetings and conversations about big issues like the world economy and trade.



It makes special efforts to improve education for all, and to support women and young people to start and run their own businesses. It also helps to improve health services.



Every two years, Commonwealth Heads of Government meet to discuss shared challenges and suggest possible solutions.



In 2020, Commonwealth leaders will meet in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda



A Commonwealth connected by sport

From children having fun with their friends to serious athletes training to set new world records, the people of the Commonwealth love sports.



The Commonwealth Games are called the 'Friendly Games' because it uses sports to bring people across the globe together.

They are held every four years. The very first Games were in Hamilton, Canada in 1930. Four hundred athletes attended.

The Games include athletics, swimming, rugby sevens, netball and lawn bowls. It has Para-Sports events for elite athletes with a disability.

But there can be lots of other sports too, like boxing, cycling, gymnastics, badminton, triathlon and wrestling.

The Gold Coast 2018 Queen's Baton Relay is the longest and most accessible in history, travelling through the entire Commonwealth for 388 days and 230,000 kilometres.

A baton carrying a special message from Queen Elizabeth II visits every nation and territory of the Commonwealth.



Getting involved

Children and young people right across the Commonwealth can also get involved in the Games!



Clyde, the popular mascot for the 2014 Games, was designed by 12-year-old Beth Gilmour from Scotland.



In July 2017, around 1300 athletes from 70 nations and territories competed in the largest ever Commonwealth Youth Games in The Bahamas, in the Caribbean



The Youth Games were started in 2000 and are for athletes from 14 to 18 years old.

The Commonwealth's Sport for Development and Peace programme shows countries how sports can be used to promote healthier lives and teach young people tolerance.



Over 6,600 athletes and team officials from 71 nations and territories made history over 11 unforgettable days of world class sporting action.

Here are some other cool sporting facts about Commonwealth Countries.



The fastest man in the world comes from the Commonwealth.
Former sprinter Usain Bolt from Jamaica is the current world record holder in the men's 100m dash, clocking 9.58 seconds in 2009. At the 2015 World Championships in Beijing he clocked 9.79 seconds.

Australia has won the Cricket World Cup five times. The West Indies and India have both won twice.

DID YOU KNOW?



Commonwealth Day

Commonwealth Day is the second Monday of March every year.



In 2019 the theme is 'A Connected Commonwealth'.



The theme explores how we can protect our natural environment, oceans and work together on trade to benefit everyone especially women, young people and marginalised groups.

Commonwealth Day is a time for our 2.4 billion-strong family to celebrate diversity, strengthen their friendships, and recognise the achievements of the Commonwealth.

It is also a great opportunity for the Commonwealth to talk about some of the important values in its charter, like democracy, human rights and development.



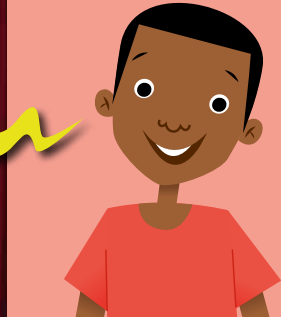
A time to celebrate

In London, Queen Elizabeth II attends a special multi-cultural, multi-faith event at Westminster Abbey, with performances from choirs, dancers and musicians.

Schools, communities and governments around the Commonwealth celebrate Commonwealth Day in a variety of ways.



There are street parties, poetry performances, storytelling festivals, fashion shows, flag ceremonies, and sports, dance and music events.



Special messages based on the theme for that year are issued by The Queen and the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

Commonwealth Day themes have covered many areas of the Commonwealth's work.



Previous themes include: An Inclusive Commonwealth in 2016, A peace – building Commonwealth in 2017 and Towards a Common Future in 2018.



Activities

What are you doing to celebrate Commonwealth Day?

Why not create your own special project? Maybe have a fashion parade showing the national dresses of different Commonwealth countries.

Have a public speaking competition on the importance of people from different countries working together.

Use the internet or books from the library to research different cultures in the Commonwealth and make a poster to present to your class.

Draw and paint the flags of the 53 member countries and display them around your classroom.

Write a story about your own country and how it became part of the Commonwealth.

Pretend you are a journalist and write a news story about the Commonwealth, based on the information in this book.

What have you learnt?

- 1 What percentage of the world's population live in the Commonwealth?
- 2 How many athletes attended the first Commonwealth Games?
- 3 When is Commonwealth Day?
- 4 Why are the Commonwealth Games called the 'Friendly Games'?
- 5 How many Countries are in the Commonwealth?
- 6 What was the Commonwealth called in 1931?
- 7 Which country re-joined the Commonwealth in 1994?
- 8 Where is the Commonwealth Secretariat based?
- 9 Where will the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 2020 be held?
- 10 Who is the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth?

Quiz answers

- 1 About 30% 2 400 3 The second Monday in March 4 It uses sports to bring people across the globe together 5 53 6 The British Commonwealth of Nations 7 South Africa 8 Marlborough House in London 9 Kigali 10 Patricia Scotland



Member countries

Member Country	Capital	Member Country	Capital
1. Antigua and Barbuda	St John's	31. New Zealand	Wellington
2. Australia	Canberra	32. Nigeria	Abuja
3. The Bahamas	Nassau	33. Pakistan	Islamabad
4. Bangladesh	Dhaka	34. Papua New Guinea	Port Moresby
5. Barbados	Bridgetown	35. Rwanda	Kigali
6. Belize	Belmopan	36. St Kitts and Nevis	Basseterre
7. Botswana	Gaborone	37. Saint Lucia	Castrie
8. Brunei	Bandar Seri Begawan	38. St Vincent and the Grenadines	Kingstown
9. Cameroon	Yaoundé	39. Samoa	Apia
10. Canada	Ottawa	40. Seychelles	Victoria
11. Cyprus	Nicosia	41. Sierra Leone	Freetown
12. Dominica	Roseau	42. Singapore	Singapore
13. eSwatini	Mbabane	43. Solomon Islands	Honiara
14. Fiji	Suva	44. South Africa	Pretoria
15. The Gambia	Banjul	45. Sri Lanka	Colombo
16. Ghana	Accra	46. Tonga	Nuku'alofa
17. Grenada	St George's	47. Trinidad and Tobago	Port of Spain
18. Guyana	Georgetown	48. Tuvalu	Funafuti
19. India	New Delhi	49. Uganda	Kampala
20. Jamaica	Kingston	50. United Kingdom	London
21. Kenya	Nairobi	51. Tanzania	Dodoma
22. Kiribati	Tarawa	52. Vanuatu	Port Vila
23. Lesotho	Maseru	53. Zambia	Lusaka
24. Malawi	Lilongwe		
25. Malaysia	Kuala Lumpur		
26. Malta	Valletta		
27. Mauritius	Port Louis		
28. Mozambique	Maputo		
29. Namibia	Windhoek		
30. Nauru	Nauru		

The designations employed and the presentation of material on the map, based on UN practice, do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Commonwealth Secretariat concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.





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The Commonwealth



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