

Debate Pack
25 March 2025
Number CDP-0066

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St Patrick's Day and Northern Irish Affairs

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Background

1.1 Major issues facing Northern Ireland

Political stability

Northern Ireland's devolved institutions were restored in February 2024.

From February 2022 until February 2024, Northern Ireland was without a fully functioning Executive or Assembly. This was a consequence of political divisions between the unionist and nationalist parties, exacerbated by post-Brexit disagreements over the [Northern Ireland Protocol and the Windsor Framework](#). For more information on the period when the Assembly and Executive were suspended, please see the Library research briefing: [Developments in Northern Ireland, 2022 to 2024](#).

On 30 January 2024 Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, then leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), announced that his party had endorsed a deal to restore the devolved Assembly and Executive.

A Command Paper outlining the deal – [Safeguarding the Union](#) – and accompanying draft Statutory Instruments were published on Wednesday 31 January 2024. The deal comprised two main elements:

1. Changes to the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020/Windsor Framework
2. Measures relating to Northern Ireland's constitutional status

Separately, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had already outlined details of a financial package worth more than £3 billion. This was conditional upon the successful restoration of power-sharing institutions.

Power sharing resumed on 3 February 2024. Michelle O'Neill (Sinn Féin) became First Minister and Emma Little-Pengelly (Democratic Unionist Party) deputy First Minister. The positions are co-equal.

Windsor Framework

In December 2020, the UK and EU agreed the Northern Ireland Protocol. This was amended in 2023 by [the Windsor Framework](#). These are outlined in the Library research briefing: [The Northern Ireland Protocol and Windsor Framework](#).

The Protocol aims to ensure there are no physical checks on goods that move between Northern Ireland and Ireland (and the rest of the EU). It

does this by applying relevant EU Single Market rules for goods to Northern Ireland, and the EU's customs rules.

This means that goods coming into Northern Ireland from Great Britain must provide paperwork to show they comply with relevant EU laws, or that they are not intended to move beyond Northern Ireland, and checks may be carried out to ensure they are compliant.

The Windsor Framework established a new system for goods passing from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. It also established [the Stormont Brake](#), a mechanism which gives the Northern Ireland Assembly the power (under certain circumstances) to object to changes to some EU laws that apply in Northern Ireland.

There is more information on the Windsor Framework on pages 11 and 12 of this document.

Economic situation

The following summary of the economy in Northern Ireland is taken from the Library research briefing: [Regional and national economic indicators](#).

Summary of economic indicators		Northern Ireland	UK
Population			
2023 mid-year estimates	Millions	1.9	68.3
Economy			
Total output (GDP), 2022	£ billions	57	2,506
Total output (GDP) per head, 2022	£	29,674	37,076
Economic Growth (GDP), 2010-22**	Annual ave real terms % ch.	1.6%	1.6%
Forecast economic growth (GVA, real terms)*			
2025	% change on year	1.3%	1.3%
2025-33**	Average annual % change	1.7%	1.9%
Labour market, Oct-Dec 2024			
Employment level	Thousands	895	33,856
Employment rate	% of population aged 16-64	72.1%	74.9%
Unemployment level	Thousands	15	1,557
Unemployment rate	% of economically active	1.6%	4.4%
Median weekly earnings, 2024	£, full time employees	671	728
Industries - employment			
Manufacturing, Jul - Sept 2024	% of total jobs	10.1%	7.0%
Public sector, Jul - Sept 2024	% of total employment	25.7%	18.1%
House prices, December 2024			
Average	£	183,000	268,000
Annual change	% change on year	9.0%	4.6%
Fiscal indicators, 2022/23			
Public sector revenue per head	£	11,271	15,227
Public sector expenditure per head	£	18,851	17,121
Net fiscal balance per head	£ ('+' is surplus; '-' is deficit)	-7,580	-1,894
Businesses			
Number of businesses, 2024	Thousands	133	5,499
Annual % change in businesses, 2024	% change on year	9.0%	-1.0%
* Forecasts from Oxford Economics (Feb 2025); ** Annual ave growth is a compound average			
Sources: See section 14. Notes and Sources			

More information on the economy of Northern Ireland can be found in the following sources:

1. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, monthly update and [dashboard](#) and [economic overview](#)
2. Northern Ireland Department for the Economy, [economic briefing](#)

1.2 The major issues affecting the Irish community in the UK

How many Irish people live in the UK?

The 2021 census for England and Wales and for Northern Ireland asked people how they would describe their national identity. It also requested information on the country people were born in. It did not ask about citizenship.

In England and Wales in 2021:

- 362,000 people (0.6% of the population) identified as Irish, either solely or in combination with a UK identity.
- 299,500 people identified as solely Irish.¹
- 324,670 were born in the Republic of Ireland.²

In Northern Ireland in 2021:

- 634,000 people (33% of the population) identified as Irish, either solely or in combination with a UK identity.
- 554,400 people identified as solely Irish (29% of the population).
- 40,400 people were born in the Republic of Ireland.³

The number of people in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland whose national identity was Irish is higher than the number of people in those countries who were born in Ireland.

Scotland's census was delayed until 2022 and statistics on nationality will not be published until after May 2024.⁴

Naturalised citizens

Although dual nationality is common, people from Ireland rarely choose to become British citizens. Around 200 Irish citizens per year apply for naturalisation, Home Office figures show.⁵ As explored below, British citizenship has little practical benefit given the special rights afforded to Irish citizens.

¹ 2021 Census, Table TS027, via [ONS Nomis](#)

² 2021 Census, Table TS012, via [ONS Nomis](#)

³ 2021 Census for Northern Ireland, [NISRA Flexible Table Builder](#)

⁴ Scotland's Census, [Census outputs schedule](#), 7 February 2024

⁵ Home Office, [Citizenship detailed datasets, year ending December 2023](#), tab Cit_D01 (average since 2010)

Constituency data

For constituency-level data on people born in Ireland, see the Library's online dashboard on [population by country of birth at the time of the 2021 Census](#).⁶

The Common Travel Area

The Common Travel Area, or CTA, is a special travel zone covering the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom (as well as the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands). British and Irish citizens can, at least in principle, travel passport-free within the CTA.

Irish citizens can also take up long-term residence and access public services in the UK without immigration restrictions, and British citizens can do the same in Ireland. These reciprocal residence rights are sometimes also referred to as being part of the CTA.⁷

The CTA dates back (in various forms) to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. The Irish Government has summed up the basic principle (PDF) as being “that the Irish and UK Governments treat each other's citizens in a similar manner to enable them to freely move between the two jurisdictions, and thereby reside and work in either jurisdiction, without the need for special permission”.⁸

Impact of Brexit

The UK and Irish Governments confirmed their intention that the CTA would continue to operate without changes post-Brexit in a May 2019 Memorandum of Understanding.⁹ The commitment to continue to operate the CTA post-Brexit was also enshrined in the Northern Ireland Protocol (part of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement).¹⁰

Unlike other EU citizens, Irish nationals were advised by the Home Office that they did not need to apply for settled or pre-settled status to secure their post-Brexit residency rights. Irish citizens do not need permission to enter or remain in the UK.¹¹ However, non-Irish and non-British family

⁶ House of Commons Library, [Constituency data: Country of birth, 2021 census](#), 27 February 2023

⁷ See Commons Library briefing CBP-7761, [The Common Travel Area and the special status of Irish citizens in UK law](#)

⁸ Government of Ireland, [Common Travel Area: Information Note from Ireland to the Article 50 Working Group \(PDF\)](#), 15 March 2017, para 3.1

⁹ [Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland concerning the Common Travel Area and associated reciprocal rights and privileges](#), 8 May 2019

¹⁰ Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, [Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland](#), art 3

¹¹ [Immigration Act 1971, s3ZA](#)

members of Irish citizens residing in the UK under EU free movement law did need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme.

There were 17,600 EU Settlement Scheme applications by Irish nationals between August 2018 and the end of December 2023.¹² The statistics do not distinguish between individuals, so people are counted more than once if they make more than one application, including to upgrade from pre-settled to settled status.

Irish people in the UK labour market

The 2021 census of England and Wales collected labour market data for people who say their national identity was Irish, alone or in combination with a UK national identity. [Census 2021 data was collected during a coronavirus lockdown](#), which has affected some of the results. This means the figures below should be treated with caution.¹³

In 2021, there were 185,200 Irish people aged 16+ in employment in England and Wales, with an employment rate for 16-64-year-olds of 75.4%, compared to a rate of 70.9% of all people aged 16-64 in England and Wales.¹⁴

The unemployment rate and economic inactivity rate (people who are not in work and not looking for work) among Irish people were both lower than average: the unemployment rate for Irish people was 4.7% compared to 5.7% for all people, and the inactivity rate for 16-64-year-olds was 20.8% compared to 24.7% for all people.

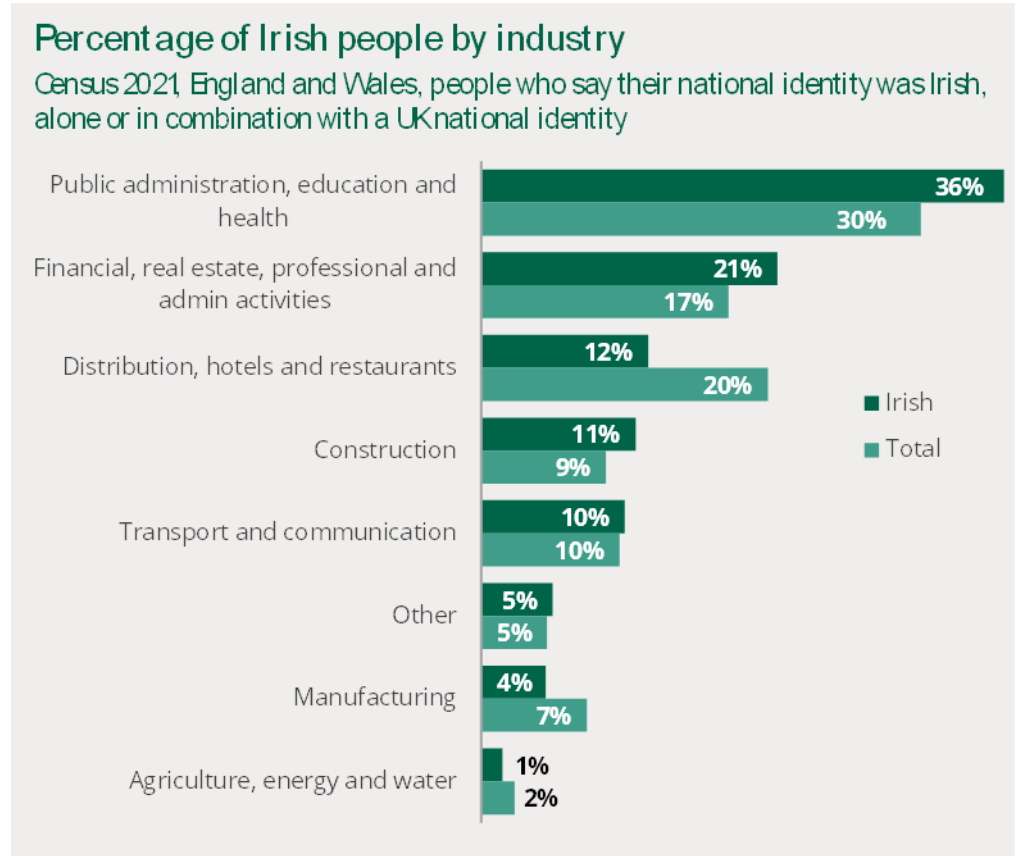
¹² Home Office, [EU Settlement Scheme quarterly statistics tables, December 2023](#), table EUSS_01

¹³ Office for National Statistics, [Labour market quality information for Census 2021](#), 27 July 2023

¹⁴ Office for National Statistics, Census 2021, [Create a custom dataset](#) (accessed 8 March 2024)

Industry

Irish people were most likely to work in public administration, education and health, with 36% of those in work who identified their national identity as Irish only or Irish and a UK national identity working in this industry. Irish people were also more likely than average to work in the financial, real estate, professional and administrative activities industry.



Source: Office for National Statistics, Census 2021, [Create a custom dataset](#)

Occupation

Irish people were most likely to work in professional occupations and were also more likely than average to be managers, directors and senior officials and to work in associate professional and technical occupations.



Source: Office for National Statistics, Census 2021, [Create a custom dataset](#)

1.3 The relationship between Ireland and the UK

For more on the history of the relationship see the following Library research briefings:

3. [The Anglo-Irish Treaty, 1921](#), 5 December 2022
4. [The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - 25 years on](#), 28 March 2023

Close relations strained by Brexit

Relations between the UK and Ireland before the 2016 EU referendum were at their best since Irish independence, as evidenced by the historic

state visits by the late [Queen Elizabeth II to Ireland in May 2011](#) and [President Higgins to the UK](#) in April 2014.

Disagreements between the EU and the UK over how to prevent a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland post-Brexit raised tensions between the Irish and UK Governments.¹⁵ However, discussions between the then Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the then Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, were seen as instrumental in breaking the deadlock between the EU and UK in October 2019, leading to a re-writing of the Northern Ireland Protocol.¹⁶ This enabled the two sides to sign the [EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement](#) that managed the UK's exit from the EU, and avoided a “no-deal” scenario.

After signing the Withdrawal Agreement, the UK raised objections to how it operated, motivated in part by discontent from Northern Ireland's Unionist community.¹⁷ In February 2023 after two years of negotiations the EU and the UK announced that a new agreement had been reached to change the way the Northern Ireland Protocol operates.¹⁸ This agreement was called [the Windsor Framework](#).

Mr Varadkar welcomed the Windsor Framework, saying he hoped it would “allo[w] us to proceed and to open a new chapter in relations”.¹⁹

Most recent tensions

In December 2023 [Ireland initiated a legal case](#) in the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) against the UK's [Northern Ireland Troubles Act 2023](#), which Ireland believes does not properly address the issue of the legacy of the Troubles.²⁰

In early 2024 the Irish government [raised concerns about migrants](#) coming from the UK across the land border with Northern Ireland, in order to claim asylum.²¹

Reset of relations under new Labour government?

On 11 July 2024, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Hilary Benn, and the then Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Minister for Foreign

¹⁵ See, for example, LSE Ideas, [Ireland-UK Relations and Northern Ireland after Brexit](#), April 2019; and LSE, [Long read | From Anglo-Irish to British-Irish relations: What's next?](#), 26 February 2020.

¹⁶ “[Johnson and Varadkar hold ‘constructive’ Brexit discussion](#)”, Politico, 10 October 2019.

¹⁷ Commons Library, [Northern Ireland Protocol: Implementation, grace periods and EU-UK discussions \(2021-22\)](#), 1 June 2022.

¹⁸ Commons Library, [Northern Ireland Protocol: The Windsor Framework](#), 21 March 2023.

¹⁹ “[DUP should be given ‘time and space’ to consider Windsor Framework](#)”, Varadkar says Irish Times, 28 February 2023.

²⁰ “[Ireland seeks legal advice on court action against UK’s ‘Troubles’ legacy bill](#)”, Financial Times, 3 September 2023.

²¹ “[UK won't take back asylum seekers from Ireland, says Rishi Sunak](#)”, BBC News, 29 April 2024.

Affairs, Micheál Martin, met at Hillsborough Castle in Northern Ireland. This was the first official engagement between the two governments. Mr Benn [spoke of the UK government's commitment](#) to “foster renewed, close relations with our nearest neighbour”.²²

On 17 July 2024, the UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Simon Harris, then Ireland's Taoiseach met at Chequers. In a [joint statement](#) the two leaders “agreed that the time was right for a reset of the partnership”.²³ On the same day the new UK Government confirmed in the [King's Speech](#) their commitment to repeal and replace the Troubles Act 2023.²⁴ Asked in an interview after the meeting if Ireland would now drop its legal action against the UK in the ECtHR, Mr Harris did not commit to do it straight away saying “no, I think we need to take this step by step”.

At the Chequers summit Mr Starmer and Mr Harris also agreed to hold annual meetings to “take stock of joint work to deepen and reinvigorate cooperation”.²⁵

The first of these annual summits took place on 6 March 2025 in Liverpool. The Taoiseach Micheál Martin said the summit marks a “major and significant manifestation” of a reset in relations between the two governments in the post-Brexit era, according to BBC News.²⁶ Keir Starmer said at the summit that the UK and Ireland have “turned a page on the turbulent years” in their relationship and are set on a meaningful partnership.²⁷ Members of both countries' cabinets also attended the summit.

Future of relations

There are three areas that will be the main focus of UK-Ireland relations in the near future. These are the UK government's plans to strengthen its ties with the EU, the working of the Windsor Framework that applies to Northern Ireland, and Northern Ireland's place in the UK and the possibility of Irish unification. All are interrelated.

EU-UK relations

On the first issue, asked about UK-EU reset plans in an interview on 7 July 2024 [Simon Harris said](#) the EU would give a “fair hearing” to “any proposal that the British government has”, and said Ireland “will always be an ally of Britain having a closer relationship with the European

²² Northern Ireland Office, [First meeting between the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Tánaiste marks renewed commitment to UK-Irish relations](#), 11 July 2024.

²³ Department of the Taoiseach, [Joint Statement by Taoiseach Simon Harris and Prime Minister Keir Starmer](#), 17 July 2024.

²⁴ Prime Minister's Office, [Oral statement to Parliament: The King's Speech 2024](#), 17 July 2024.

²⁵ Department of the Taoiseach, [Joint Statement by Taoiseach Simon Harris and Prime Minister Keir Starmer](#), 17 July 2024.

²⁶ [“Taoiseach praises UK-Irish 'reset' ahead of joint summit”](#), BBC News, 5 March 2025.

²⁷ [“UK and Ireland have 'turned a page on the turbulent years'”](#), BBC News, 6 March 2025

Union". He added "Is there space to have a veterinary agreement, is there space in terms of student mobility, is there space to work closer together on issues? I think there absolutely is".²⁸

If the EU and the UK were to sign a veterinary agreement it would mean, depending on the type of agreement, that checks and controls on animal and plant goods moving between Great Britain and Northern Ireland could be reduced, and that could potentially address, at least in part, a significant source of upset in Northern Ireland's Unionist community.²⁹

The Windsor Framework

On the second issue of the operation of the Windsor Framework, analysis by the thinktank UK in a Changing Europe published earlier in July 2024 on the upcoming challenges for UK-EU relations gives more detail on how the Framework might cause problems:

A first challenge is the implementation of the Windsor Framework. This simplifies trade from Great Britain to Northern Ireland and relies upon a product labelling system which is to be implemented between October 2024 and July 2025. Some businesses are concerned about the cost of the scheme and may apply pressure for a delay or changes.

While Labour may be keen to appease business, a failure to implement the Framework would not impress the EU, which will be reluctant to negotiate any new agreements before the UK makes good on existing commitments. Labour may have to be willing to take some domestic heat if it is to make meaningful progress in Brussels.³⁰

The analysis went on to explain how the democratic consent vote in the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2024 on the Framework held in December 2024 could add to the complexities, as well as the continuing process of new EU legislation applying to Northern Ireland under the Framework:

And at the end of this year the Northern Ireland Assembly will hold a 'democratic consent vote' on the continued application of the part of the Windsor Framework which applies EU goods regulations in Northern Ireland. If, as is likely, the vote is approved but without majority support from unionist MLAs (assembly members), the UK government is committed to commissioning a review of the Framework, concluding next summer.

There could be strong pressure on Labour to present substantive recommendations for change to the EU, not least if Unionists threaten to once again collapse power-sharing in Northern Ireland – a deeply undesirable scenario for a government committed to improving relations with the devolved governments. Yet the EU will be very reluctant to

²⁸ ["Irish prime minister: EU open to Keir Starmer's Brexit plan"](#), Politico, 7 July 2024.

²⁹ Commons Library, [Securing a veterinary agreement in the Northern Ireland Protocol](#), 13 December 2021.

³⁰ UK In a Changing Europe, [Labour is on a European honeymoon, but tougher tests await](#), 18 July 2024.

reopen the workings of the Northern Ireland question which took so long to settle, meaning Labour faces a very delicate balancing act.

And relatedly, the next European Commission will continue to bring forward new legislation which applies in Northern Ireland under the terms of the Windsor Framework. Where this has a disruptive effect on GB-NI trade, MLAs may use their powers to veto its application, which then means the UK and EU have to find alternative solutions which facilitate GB-NI trade, protect the EU single market, and keep the Irish border open.³¹

The democratic consent vote was held in December 2024, and passed on a simple majority rather than with cross-community support.³² For more on the democratic consent mechanism, and the meaning of cross-community support see Library Insight: [Democratic consent mechanism and the Northern Ireland Assembly](#), 24 October 2024. Hilary Benn announced that former Northern Ireland Secretary Lord Murphy will lead a review into how the Framework is functioning in Northern Ireland, which the government committed to doing if the vote passed without cross-community support.³³

The Irish Government has been at the forefront of managing UK-EU tensions over the application of the Northern Ireland Protocol/Windsor Framework and will be keen to ensure power-sharing in Northern Ireland continues.

Reunification

On the third issue of Northern Ireland's place in the UK, there has been some focus in the recent years on the possibility of a referendum being held on the question of Irish reunification, what is often called a 'border poll'. Under the [Belfast/Good Friday Agreement](#), and as set out in domestic law in the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the UK Government has a commitment to hold a referendum on whether Northern Ireland should rejoin Ireland "if it appears likely" that there is a majority supporting the issue in the North.

The Institute for Government think tank have a [useful explainer](#) on how the border poll would work, and what the various parties in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government have said about a possible referendum. As the explainer sets out, recent Irish Governments have said that unification of Ireland is not a priority.³⁴ However, the rise of the political party Sinn Féin, which champions Irish unification in Ireland and Northern Ireland, has raised questions as to whether the issue would be given more focus should they gain power in the South (though they once

³¹ UK In a Changing Europe, [Labour is on a European honeymoon, but tougher tests await](#), 18 July 2024.

³² ["Stormont votes to extend post-Brexit trading arrangements"](#), BBC News, 10 December 2024.

³³ ["Lord Murphy to conduct review into Windsor Framework"](#), Yahoo News, 9 January 2025.

³⁴ Institute for Government, [Explainer: Irish reunification](#), 9 February 2024.

again failed to come into government following the [November 2024 general elections](#) in Ireland).³⁵

1.4 Northern Ireland's contribution to the rest of the UK

Northern Ireland has played a significant role in shaping the United Kingdom's political landscape, cultural heritage, economic development, and public services despite its relatively small size.

Historical significance

The historian Ivan Gibbons has written that the Government of Ireland Act 1920 (partitioned the island of Ireland and created what is now Northern Ireland) was “the single most important piece of British legislation of the twentieth century relating to Ireland”.³⁶

The region played a crucial role during World War II, with Belfast serving as an important naval base. Belfast's shipyards, particularly Harland and Wolff, built many vessels for the Royal Navy and merchant fleet, including the famous HMS Belfast.³⁷

Political contribution

Northern Ireland's complex political history has deeply influenced UK politics.

The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement of 1998 represents one of the most significant peace processes in modern European history and has become a model for conflict resolution worldwide.³⁸ The Northern Irish politicians John Hume and David Trimble won the 1998 Nobel Peace Prize for “for their efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland.”³⁹

The power-sharing arrangement in Northern Ireland's devolved government has added a distinctive dimension to UK governance structures. Northern Irish political parties like the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) have occasionally held pivotal positions in Westminster, most notably during the 2017-19 Conservative government when they

³⁵ [“Does Sinn Féin rise bring Irish unity any closer?”](#), BBC News, 7 July 2024.

³⁶ Ivan Gibbons, *Partition: How and Why Ireland Was Divided*, London: Haus, 2020

³⁷ Barton, B. (1995). *Northern Ireland in the Second World War*. Ulster Historical Foundation.

³⁸ [About the Good Friday Agreement](#), Irish Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade, accessed 18 March 2025

³⁹ [Nobel Laureates 1998](#), Nobel Prize, accessed 18 March 2025

provided support to the Conservative government through a confidence and supply arrangement.

Further detailed information on the political history of Northern Ireland and how it relates to the rest of the UK can be found in the House of Commons Library research briefing [Parliament and Northern Ireland 1921-2021](#).

Cultural contribution

Literary figures such as like Seamus Heaney, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature, and C.S. Lewis, author of the Chronicles of Narnia, are from Northern Ireland. The region's distinctive music traditions, including Ulster Scots folk music, have influenced the broader UK music scene.

The film and television industry in Northern Ireland is renowned, with productions like Game of Thrones showcasing the region's landscapes and creating thousands of jobs.⁴⁰ Northern Irish actors like Kenneth Branagh, Liam Neeson, and James Nesbitt have achieved international recognition.

1.5 Irish contribution to the UK

Irish people in the UK have contributed hugely to life here across a wide range of sectors, and the lives of Irish and British people have been intertwined for millennia.⁴¹

Niall Gallagher, chairman of Irish Heritage, an organisation that celebrates the work of Irish writers, composers, singers and musicians who are trying to build careers in the UK and beyond, has described the contribution of the Irish to cultural life in the UK as “incalculable”.⁴²

The contribution of Irish labour to the British construction industry has been described by Sir William McAlpine as “immeasurable”.⁴³ For example, Irish workers, were part of the teams that built the earliest tunnels for the London Underground network, as well as more modern works such as the Victoria Line.⁴⁴

Irish people have also contributed greatly to the National Health Service; President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins paid tribute to their service

⁴⁰ [Northern Ireland Film and the case of Game of Thrones](#), Ulster University, 2019

⁴¹ [“How the Irish shape Britain: A story of rejection and tolerance”](#), BBC News, 24 January 2021

⁴² [“Irish people's contribution to British life is incalculable”](#), Irish Post, 12 April 2014

⁴³ [“A tribute to Irish construction workers”](#), Irish Post, 13 February 2023

⁴⁴ [“Last of the navvies: Irishman who dug all-night Tube line”](#), Irish Times, 19 August 2016; The History Press, [The forgotten men of the London Underground](#), 18 December 2015

during his 2014 State Visit to the UK.⁴⁵ As of June 2023, 13,700 members of NHS staff in England reported their nationality as Irish. This includes around 2,300 doctors and over 4,200 nurses.⁴⁶

Two British Prime Ministers—William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne, and Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington—were born in Ireland.

Further information on this topic can be found in the Commons Library debate pack [Saint Patrick's Day and the contribution of the Irish diaspora to the UK](#).

⁴⁵ "[President Higgins told how Irish workers play 'an integral role in the NHS'](#)", Irish Post, 9 April 2014

⁴⁶ See Commons Library Briefing CBP-7783, [NHS staff from overseas: statistics](#)

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Press and media articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: The Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

[Royals visit Belfast as part of NI trip](#)

BBC News online

19 March 2025

[British government rejects proposal for UK-wide bank holiday for St. Patrick's Day](#)

The Journal

18 March 2025

[St Patrick's Day festivities take place across NI](#)

BBC

17 March 2025

[2025 Is Unlikely To Be A Year Of Harmony In Northern Irish Politics](#)

Politics Home

2 January 2025

[How Northern Irish rap trio Kneecap rose to fame by subverting the Troubles](#)

Guardian

18 August 2024

[‘I felt the social divisions much more acutely in England than I do in Northern Ireland’](#)

Irish Times

15 June 2024

[Northern Ireland's Political Future](#)

The Constitution Unit

1 June 2024

[What the UK Census really says about the number of Irish in Britain](#)

RTE

9 December 2022

[‘There's not many left now': census shines spotlight on Britain's dwindling Irish community](#)

Guardian

5 November 2022

[Being Irish in Britain: Irishness, Britishness and me](#)

Yorkshire Bylines

12 April 2021

3

Parliamentary material

Parliamentary questions

Public Holidays

19 Feb 2025 | 30231

Asked by: Mary Kelly Foy

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make it his policy to establish additional public holidays to mark (a) St Andrew's Day, (b) St David's Day, (c) St George's Day and (d) St Patrick's Day.

Answering member: Justin Madders | **Department:** Department for Business and Trade

The current pattern of bank and public holidays is well established and accepted. The Government has no plans to change it.

Northern Ireland and Scotland have additional bank holidays for St Patrick's Day and St Andrew's Day respectively.

While an additional bank holiday may benefit some communities and sectors, the cost to the economy of an additional bank holiday remains considerable. The latest analysis estimates the cost to the UK economy for a one-off bank holiday to be around £2bn.

Cultural Heritage: Northern Ireland

23 Oct 2024 | HL1764

Asked by: Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made to establish a Homecoming project to strengthen links and relationships with the Northern Ireland diaspora and alumni across the world, as detailed in the New Decade, New Approach Deal of 2020.

Answering member: Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent | **Department:** Northern Ireland Office

As set out in the third written ministerial update on New Decade, New Approach, tabled by the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 26 April 2023, the previous Government concluded that there was no

viable delivery route for the Homecoming programme that met key requirements of regularity, propriety, value for money and feasibility.

Debates

St Patrick's Day: UK Bank Holiday

18 Mar 2025 | House of Commons | 764 cc319-328

Adjournment debate

St Patrick's Day: Irish Diaspora in the UK

14 Mar 2024 | Westminster Hall | 747 c200WH

Motion that this House has considered St Patrick's Day and the contribution of the Irish diaspora to the UK. Agreed to on question. Sitting adjourned without Question put.

Early Day Motions (EDMs)

St Patrick's Day 2024

513 (session 2023-24)

14 Mar 2024

Martin Docherty-Hughes

That this House notes that 17 March each year marks St Patrick's Day; recognises that 17 March is an opportunity to celebrate the diverse cultures and heritage of the island of Ireland, as well as celebrating the contribution that Ireland and its diaspora has made in shaping nations across the globe; understands that the people of Scotland, England and Wales, and in particular those within the village of Old Kilpatrick, West Dunbartonshire, have a strong connection to St Patrick as Old Kilpatrick, the most westerly fort of the Roman Antonine Wall, is believed to be Patrick's birthplace as denoted by the county and subsequent local authorities' use of the St Patrick's Saltire emblem, and that this represents just one of the many bonds that unite the people of these islands in friendship; and wishes all those in the isle of Ireland and the diaspora across the world health, happiness and peace as they celebrate St Patrick's Day.

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