

Our Story,
Our World

**Our
Commonwealth**



The story of 56 countries



Hello! Did you know that over 30% of the world's people live in the Commonwealth? That's nearly 2.7 billion adults and children!

The people of the Commonwealth are a diverse group. Some live on 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 56 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.

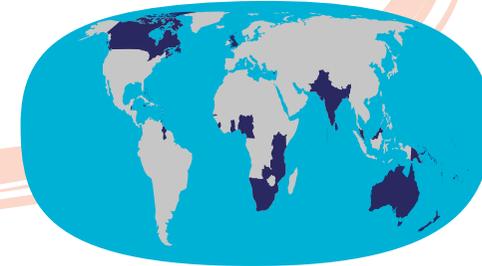


The Commonwealth story

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.



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



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

In **1961** South Africa left the Commonwealth because concerns were raised about the country's policy of segregating white and black people. Commonwealth leaders supported the struggle against white minority rule.



Marlborough House

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

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



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.

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 **2022**, Gabon and Togo became the latest countries to join the Commonwealth.

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

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 Shirley Botchway, the first woman from Africa to hold the post.



DID YOU KNOW?

His majesty King Charles III is the Head of the Commonwealth. He is also Head of State for 15 Commonwealth member countries. Other countries are republics or have their own monarch.



About 60% of 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.

Diversity and unity in the Commonwealth



Thousands of languages are represented in this community of 56 countries.

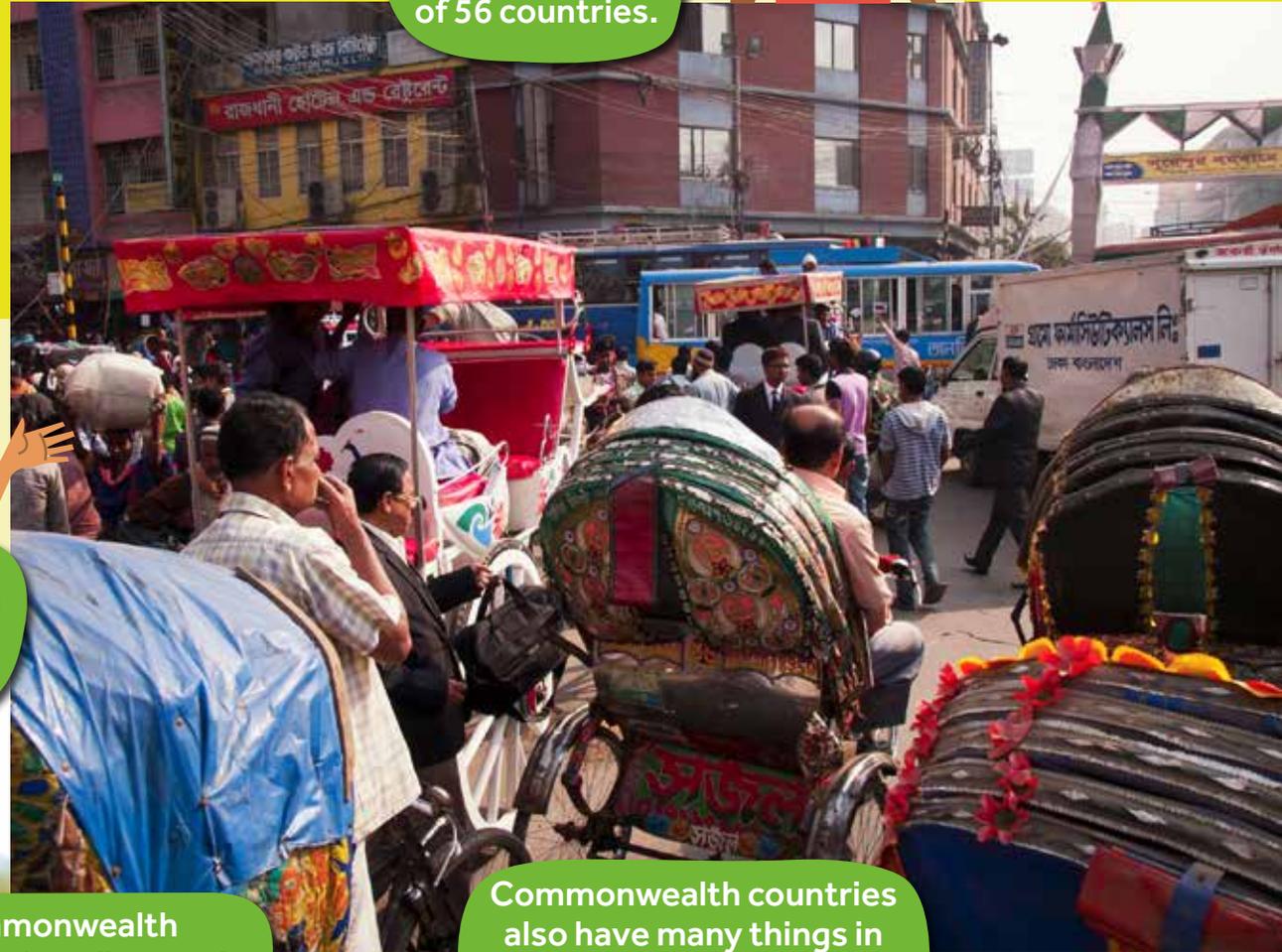


The people of the Commonwealth are from many races and religions.

Some large countries like Australia, which has a population of more than 27 million, are sparsely populated.



Some smaller countries like Bangladesh, where over 170 million people live, are very densely populated.



33 Commonwealth countries are 'small states' – usually with populations of fewer 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.



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 a louder voice in global meetings and discussions about big issues like the world economy, trade, energy and climate.



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

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

In 2026, Commonwealth leaders are meeting in Antigua and Barbuda, a twin-island country in the Caribbean Sea.



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.



They are held every four years. The very first Games were in Hamilton, Canada in 1930, where 400 athletes competed.

The Commonwealth Games are called the 'Friendly Games' because they use sports to bring people across the Commonwealth together.

The Games include athletics, swimming, basketball, netball and bowls. They have Para-Sports events for elite athletes with a disability.

But there can be lots of other sports too, like boxing, cycling, gymnastics, judo, weightlifting and boxing.

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

For the 2026 games, the Head of the Commonwealth sent all participating countries and territories a special baton to decorate and bring to the opening ceremony.



Getting involved

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



Finnie, the unicorn mascot for the 2026 Games, was imagined by 76 children from 24 schools across the host city, Glasgow, UK.



Over 5,000 athletes and officials from 72 nations and territories took part in the last Games in Birmingham, UK, in 2022.



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.

In July 2017, around 1,300 athletes from 70 nations and territories competed in the largest ever Commonwealth Youth Games in The Bahamas, in the Caribbean.



The 2027 youth games will be held in Malta in October and November. 1,150 athletes aged 14–18 will compete in eight sports, including – for the first time – sailing and water polo. It will also have the largest Para sport programme yet, featuring swimming as well as athletics.

DID YOU KNOW?

Here are some other cool sporting facts about Commonwealth countries.



Usain Bolt was the fastest man in the world at the 2011 Olympics. He holds an unbeaten 100 metres record of 9.58 seconds, and comes from Jamaica, a Commonwealth country.

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

Commonwealth Day

Commonwealth Day is the second Monday of March every year.

Commonwealth Day 2024 was especially significant as the modern Commonwealth celebrated its 75th anniversary in the same year. The modern Commonwealth of Nations was born after a Commonwealth Prime Ministers meeting in London on 26 April 1949, which declared that republics and other independent countries could be equal members.

Commonwealth Day is a time for our 2.7 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.

The theme for Commonwealth Day 2026 is 'Unlocking Opportunities Together for a Prosperous Commonwealth'.

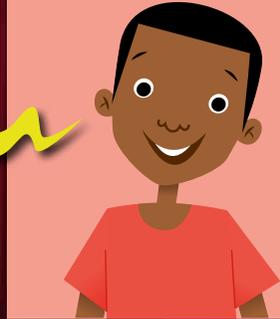
A time to celebrate

In London, the Head of the Commonwealth 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 Head of the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

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

Previous themes include 'One Resilient Common Future' in 2024 and 'Together We Thrive' in 2025.



Activities

What are you doing to celebrate Commonwealth Day?

Cook a dish from another Commonwealth country, to enjoy with your family.

Create a fun song about 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 56 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 learned?

- 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 countries joined the Commonwealth in 2022?
- 8** Where is the Commonwealth Secretariat based?
- 9** What country is host of the 2026 Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting?
- 10** Who is the first woman from Africa to become Secretary-General of the Commonwealth?

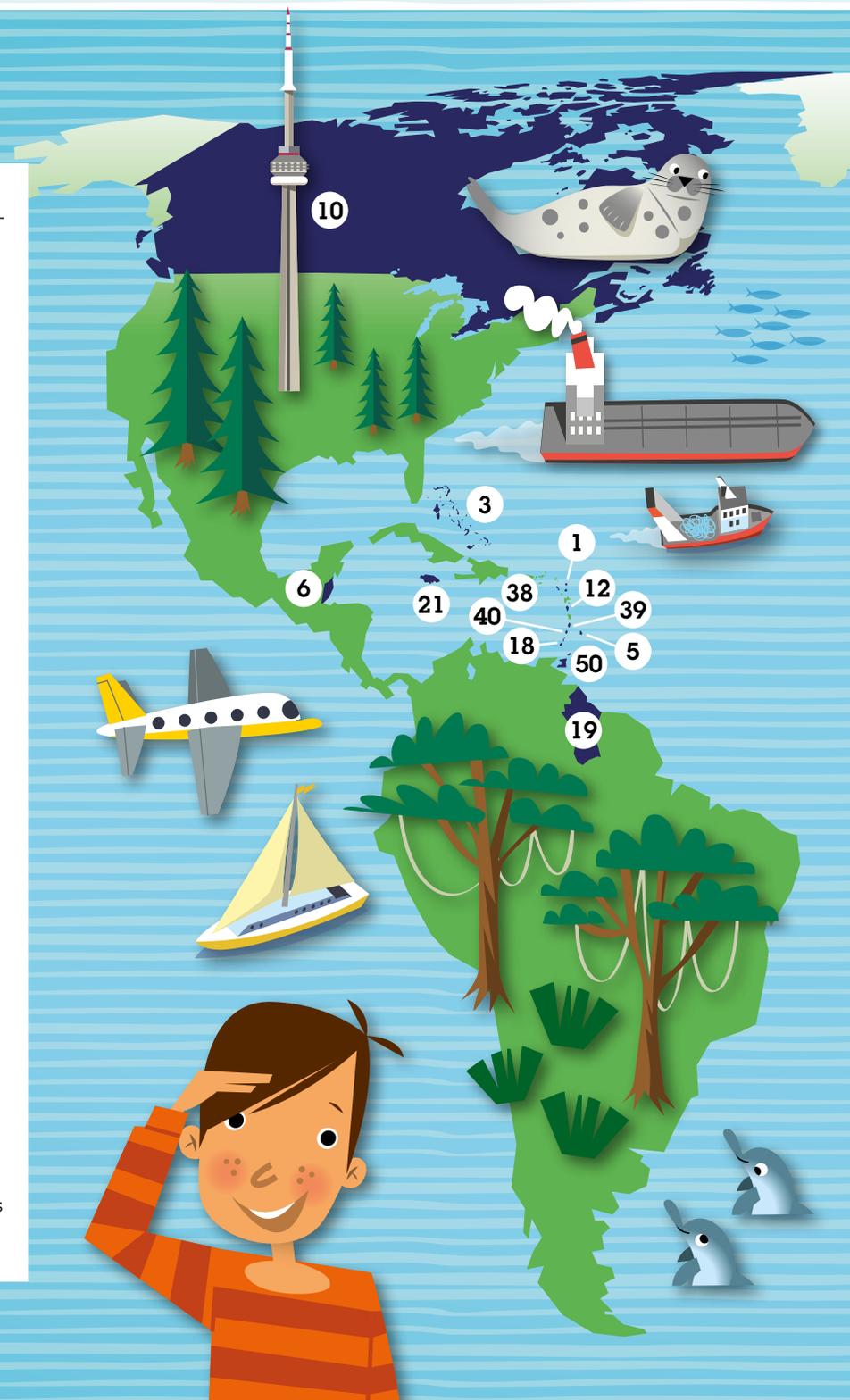


Quiz answers 1 About 30% 2 400 3 The second Monday in March 4 It uses sports to bring people across the globe together 5 56 6 The British Commonwealth of Nations 7 Gabon and Togo 8 Marlborough House in London 9 Antigua and Barbuda 10 Shirley Botchway

Member countries

| Member Country | Capital | Member Country | Capital |
|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Antigua and Barbuda | St John's | 31. Namibia | Windhoek |
| 2. Australia | Canberra | 32. Nauru | Nauru |
| 3. The Bahamas | Nassau | 33. New Zealand | Wellington |
| 4. Bangladesh | Dhaka | 34. Nigeria | Abuja |
| 5. Barbados | Bridgetown | 35. Pakistan | Islamabad |
| 6. Belize | Belmopan | 36. Papua New Guinea | Port Moresby |
| 7. Botswana | Gaborone | 37. Rwanda | Kigali |
| 8. Brunei | Bandar Seri Begawan | 38. St Kitts and Nevis | Basseterre |
| 9. Cameroon | Yaoundé | 39. Saint Lucia | Castries |
| 10. Canada | Ottawa | 40. St Vincent and the Grenadines | Kingstown |
| 11. Cyprus | Nicosia | 41. Samoa | Apia |
| 12. Dominica | Roseau | 42. Seychelles | Victoria |
| 13. Eswatini | Mbabane | 43. Sierra Leone | Freetown |
| 14. Fiji | Suva | 44. Singapore | Singapore |
| 15. Gabon | Libreville | 45. Solomon Islands | Honiara |
| 16. The Gambia | Banjul | 46. South Africa | Pretoria |
| 17. Ghana | Accra | 47. Sri Lanka | Colombo |
| 18. Grenada | St George's | 48. Togo | Lomé |
| 19. Guyana | Georgetown | 49. Tonga | Nuku'alofa |
| 20. India | New Delhi | 50. Trinidad and Tobago | Port of Spain |
| 21. Jamaica | Kingston | 51. Tuvalu | Funafuti |
| 22. Kenya | Nairobi | 52. Uganda | Kampala |
| 23. Kiribati | Tarawa | 53. United Kingdom | London |
| 24. Lesotho | Maseru | 54. Tanzania | Dodoma |
| 25. Malawi | Lilongwe | 55. Vanuatu | Port Vila |
| 26. Malaysia | Kuala Lumpur | 56. Zambia | Lusaka |
| 27. Maldives | Malé | | |
| 28. Malta | Valletta | | |
| 29. Mauritius | Port Louis | | |
| 30. Mozambique | Maputo | | |

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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