

The British Monarchy

The British monarchy is the **constitutional monarchy / parliamentary monarchy** of the United Kingdom, its dependencies and its overseas territories. Its powers are limited by those of Parliament.

Britain has no written constitution, but a number of successive acts and laws provide an "unwritten" or "uncodified" constitution.

The British monarchy is hereditary. The current **monarch** and **head of state**, **King Charles III**, ascended the throne on the death of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, on 8 September 2022.

As the monarchy is constitutional, the monarch is limited to **non-partisan functions** and has mainly a **ceremonial role**.

The sovereign is:

- Head of State
- Head of the Church of England (→ appoints senior clergy on recommendation of the **Prime Minister** (PM)).
- Head of the Commonwealth
- Commander-in-chief of the British Armed Forces

The functions of the sovereign are limited and symbolic. Among others:

- appoints the PM (*the Sovereign must appoint **the leader of the party or coalition that has a majority in the House of Commons** = the leader of the party that has won the general elections and has the biggest number of Members of Parliament (MPs)*)
- opens Parliament with the "Speech from the Throne" (*written by the PM*)
→ "State opening of Parliament" (otherwise the monarch is not allowed in Parliament)
- declares war *ratifies what the government*
- concludes international treaties *has decided*

The United Kingdom and **fifteen other Commonwealth monarchies** (former British colonies) that share the same person as their monarch are called **Commonwealth realms**. However, each country is sovereign and independent of the others, and the monarch has a different, specific, and official national title and style for each realm.

"God Save the King" (or "God Save the Queen") is the British national anthem, and the monarch appears on postage stamps, coins and banknotes.

The Sovereign's official residence in London is **Buckingham Palace**. Another official residence is Windsor Castle, the largest occupied castle in the world, which is used principally at weekends. The Sovereign's official residence in Scotland is the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh.

The monarch and his or her immediate family undertake various official, **ceremonial, diplomatic and representational duties**.