

The Commonwealth of Nations

First, listen to your fellow classmates who will do a quick presentation on « What is the Commonwealth ? »

Browse the official website : <https://thecommonwealth.org>

1. Read this text and answer the questions.

The Commonwealth of Nations today, a voluntary association of 56 independent countries that cooperate on shared goals while remaining fully sovereign. Together, these nations represent approximately 2.7 billion people across Africa, Asia, Europe, the Caribbean, the Americas, and the Pacific. Most members are former territories of the British Empire, although membership is based on shared values rather than colonial history alone.

The Commonwealth promotes democracy, human rights, good governance, the rule of law, sustainable development, education, and international cooperation. Member countries work together on issues such as economic growth, climate change, peacebuilding, gender equality, youth empowerment, digital innovation, and disaster resilience. Unlike a political union, the Commonwealth does not govern its members; instead, it provides a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and mutual support. One of its greatest strengths is its young population, with more than 60% of Commonwealth citizens under the age of 30. This creates opportunities for innovation, education, entrepreneurship, and future leadership. The organization also supports election monitoring, professional networks, scholarship programs, and development initiatives that benefit member states. Commonwealth nations are connected not by political control but by a commitment to cooperation and shared principles. Members range from some of the world's largest countries, such as India, to small island nations in the Pacific and Caribbean. Despite their diversity in culture, language, geography, and economic development, they collaborate to address common challenges and opportunities. Ultimately, the Commonwealth represents a modern network of independent nations that seek to build prosperity, stability, and understanding through partnership. It demonstrates how historical connections have evolved into a voluntary community focused on creating a more sustainable, peaceful, and inclusive future for its citizens.

From Proactivsocialworkers on Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DZtnF1SISiK/>

1. Decide whether each statement is Right (R) or Wrong (W).

- a) All Commonwealth member countries were once part of the British Empire.
- b) The Commonwealth is made up of 56 independent and sovereign countries.
- c) The Commonwealth has the authority to make laws for its member states.
- d) Members cooperate on issues such as climate change, education, and economic development.
- e) More than half of the Commonwealth's population is under the age of 30.
- f) The Commonwealth only includes large and economically developed countries.
- g) Cooperation through dialogue and mutual support is encouraged rather than political control.

2. According to the text, what are three key goals or values promoted by the **Commonwealth**?

3. Why does the author describe the Commonwealth as "**not a political union**"?

4. The text states that **more than 60% of Commonwealth citizens are under the age of 30**. Why is this presented as one of the organisation's greatest strengths?

Debate : a) Do you think organisations like the Commonwealth can help solve global problems?

b) Imagine your country is considering joining the Commonwealth. Write a 150-word speech either supporting or opposing membership.

Document 1 a

Do Commonwealth demands for £18 trillion of slavery reparations stack up?

Ben Butcher – The Telegraph – 24 October 2024

Keir Starmer is facing demands to make reparations for slavery at a meeting of Commonwealth countries. The most widely-used figure is that the UK owes £18 trillion to the ancestors of slaves – an amount worth seven times the country's annual economic output.

So who do we owe this to – and how did they come up with such an alarming figure?

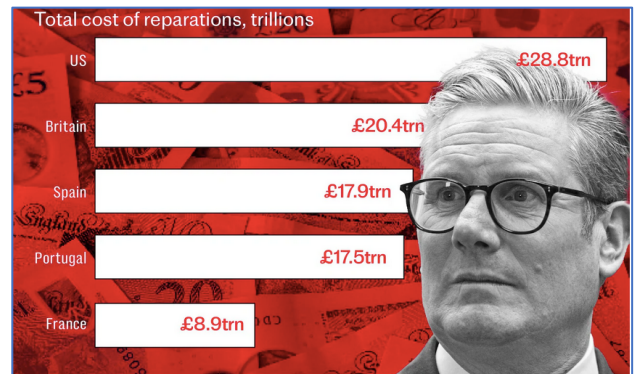
The top line figure comes from the Brattle Group Report on Reparations for Transatlantic Chattel Slavery published last June. The report concludes that combined, western countries owe the descendants of slaves £100 trillion in reparations for both the slavery and post-emancipation periods.

Of this, the UK owes £20 trillion, made up mostly of the £18 trillion in compensation for the period of enslavement. This apparently makes the UK the second most indebted country, after the United States (£29 trillion). Portugal and Spain come in close third and fourth with £18 trillion owed each for both pre and post-slavery periods. Most of the British money would go to Jamaica and Barbados, where the report estimates almost two million slaves were transported, born or died.

Around half of the total figure for the slavery period comes from lost wages – some £43 trillion across all western countries. To reach the figure, they calculated lost wages compared to a non-slave in similar roles, for the average lifespan of a slave. Unlike other workers, slaves were not paid. For the 1.2 million slaves who died in transit, the academics simply applied a “lost-earnings” calculation across the whole estimated lifespan if they had lived. The rest of the figures came from loss of liberty (£8.9 trillion), personal injury (£4.8 trillion), mental pain and anguish (£18.7 trillion) and gender-based violence (£9.2 trillion).

The report comes with a payment plan for the British government. If the UK was to pay off the reparations for the next 25 years (with an interest rate of 2.5 per cent), it would be roughly £740 billion pounds a year. In context, that would require the government finding a pot of money four times the NHS budget each year to meet the payments. Countries can, in times of desperation, find vast amounts of money through borrowing or increased taxation. The most recent comparison would be Covid, which cost up to £410 billion in additional spending, but even that is just half the amount needed each year.

However, the authors' reports correctly highlight that reparations are not without precedence. Germany only paid off its First World War payments in 2010. In 2016, half a billion dollars was paid to Native-American tribes for historic wrongs, whilst \$1.2 billion was paid to interned Japanese-Americans after the Second World War. And of course, some £8.3 billion was paid to British slave-owners for the financial inconvenience they faced at abolition, the report says. The slavery report calls for 2,250 times that today, an impossibly high number – and given some of the flaws in the analysis, one only meant as a starting point.



- 1. Does the author appear to be neutral, supportive, or critical of the £18 trillion reparations estimate?**
- 2. According to the article, what are the main arguments both in favour of and against the reparations report? Which side do you find more convincing, and why?**

Document 1b – Caribbean demands Britain give up territories in growing colonial dispute

Skynews Australia – 18 July 2026

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suu08GMIFd8>

Watch and analyse the tones and points of view. How are these stances backed by reliable facts and arguments ?

Document 2

Is 2026 the Commonwealth Games' last dance or a future-proofing revamp?

Matthew Henry – BBC 26th July 2026

The 2026 Commonwealth Games were thrown into doubt when its original hosts, the Australian state of Victoria, pulled out in 2023 citing spiraling costs. That decision took the leaders of Commonwealth Sport by surprise. After more than a year of uncertainty, Glasgow stepped in to host the Games for the second time, following on from the highly successful event in the Scottish city in 2014.

But, with limited preparation time a significant factor, the Games' return to Glasgow is a much smaller event. There was competition across 18 sports in 2014 but only 10 sports will feature this year. There are expected to be around 2,000 fewer athletes and no new stadiums have been built, with the athletics events having moved from the 46,000-seater Hampden Park to the Scotstoun Stadium, which will hold just over 10,000 people.

Costs of running the event have been cut from between £700m and £800m for Birmingham 2022 to £160m for Glasgow. Whether by accident or design, organisers insist the situation has created a template for the future. They believe a smaller, cheaper, more sustainable Commonwealth Games can last. "I don't think we have ever been stronger," Katie Sadleir, chief executive of Commonwealth Sport, told BBC Sport. "We took a hard look at ourselves and realised we needed to reset and reimagine this Games so it is an attractive proposition for our members." Crucially, the Commonwealth Games have already secured the Indian city of Ahmedabad as host for 2030. New Zealand has expressed interest in hosting in 2034 while Nigeria remains interested after challenging Ahmedabad's bid for 2030.

Having begun in 1930 as the British Empire Games, the Commonwealth Games face questions about their place and relevance in the modern world. England weightlifter Emily Campbell told the BBC the Games are "one of the best things that came out of colonisation" while three-time Olympic swimming gold medallist Tom Dean insists they can be a "force for good" despite the difficult past.

But other athletes have opted to prioritise different events. Olympic 800m champion Keely Hodgkinson is skipping Glasgow in favour of the European Athletics Championships, Dina Asher-Smith, the fastest British woman in history, and Olympic 100m champion Julien Alfred of St Lucia have also pulled out.

But it is not all doom and gloom. The Commonwealth Games remain a pinnacle for sports like netball and there is also an increased focus on Para-sport, with this the most integrated Games ever. Six of the 10 sports include Para-competitions with a Commonwealth Games record 47 medal events. Golds, silvers and bronzes won in Para-events will, unlike with other multi-sport events, count towards the overall medal total. Paralympic swimming champion Brock Whiston told BBC Sport: "Without the Commonwealth Games, the smaller countries don't get the chance to show how powerful that integration is. The Commonwealth Games is vital to ensuring there are equal opportunities."

English swimmer James Guy, another Olympic champion, told BBC Sport the event remains a crucial part of an athlete's development. "It is a bit easier to make than the GB team," he said. "It is a really good way to get on there, get on a relay and get a medal and that is really important for development so the younger guys and girls can progress."

As ever, another major factor in assessing the potential longevity of the Commonwealth Games will be the response from fans. Around 1.3 million tickets were sold in 2014 – a figure that will certainly not be matched this time. Sales have been strongest for athletics and cycling but tickets remain available for all sports across the 11 days of competition.

There is also a significant change in the UK this year with the BBC, who had provided coverage for 18 Commonwealth Games in a row, being replaced by TNT Sports as the live television broadcaster. While radio coverage remains on BBC Radio 5 Live, it means there will be no free-to-air live TV coverage. That makes cutting through to the general public more challenging at a crucial time.

- 1) What changes have been made to the 2026 Commonwealth Games?**
- 2) What arguments does the article present both for and against the idea that the Commonwealth Games still have a relevant future?**

Grammar – Quantifiers: much, many, few, little, fewer, less

Quantifiers show **how much** or **how many** of something we have.

1. Countable nouns (things we can count)

→ **many / few / a few / fewer + plural nouns**

Examples: **Many athletes** compete in the Commonwealth Games. **Few countries** want to host the event. There are **fewer sports** in 2026 than in 2022.

2. Uncountable nouns (things we cannot count)

→ **much / little / a little / less + uncountable nouns**

Examples : The organisers have **less money** than before. They have **little time** to prepare. The event does not need **much funding**.

Remember:

fewer + things you can count => fewer athletes ; fewer sports ; fewer countries

less + things you cannot count => less money ; less time ; less support

Difference:

- **few / little** = almost none (negative idea : not many, almost none)
→ **Few countries** are interested in hosting the Games.
(= Only a small number of countries are interested; this suggests a problem.)
→ Few countries applied to host the Games. → There is little time left.
- **a few / a little** = some (positive idea : a small, but positive number)
→ There are **a few countries** interested in hosting the Games.
(= Some countries are interested; this is a positive idea.) → There is a little hope for the future.

Complete the sentences - Use: much – many – little – few – a little – a few – fewer – less

1. There are _____ sports than there were in 2014.
2. The Games now cost _____ money than before.
3. Only _____ countries have officially offered to host future Games.
4. There is very _____ time left before the opening ceremony.
5. _____ athletes have withdrawn from the competition.
6. Glasgow has _____ experience because it successfully hosted the Games in 2014.
7. The organisers hope that _____ people will attend than in 2014.
8. The 2026 Games will have _____ sports than previous editions.
9. Organisers have _____ money to spend.
10. Only _____ countries have offered to host future Games.
11. There is _____ time before the competition starts.
12. Although there are _____ sports, the organisers believe the event can still succeed.

Discussion

1. Do you think the Commonwealth Games still have a place in today's world? Give at least two reasons for your opinion.
2. Would you prefer a smaller, cheaper sporting event that is more environmentally friendly, or a larger event with more sports and athletes? Explain your answer.

Document 3

À Glasgow, les Jeux du Commonwealth misent sur la sobriété pour assurer leur survie

Nour-Eddine Zidane – France Culture - 23 juillet 2026

Ces JO de l'ancien Empire britannique débutent à Glasgow, en Écosse, jeudi, avec un format réduit. Face à l'envolée des coûts d'organisation, cette édition privilégie la sobriété pour assurer la pérennité de cet événement sportif international.

Cet été devait marquer le retour en Australie des Jeux du Commonwealth, répartis dans plusieurs villes, mais l'inflation des coûts post-Covid a poussé l'État de Victoria et son Premier ministre de l'époque, Daniel Andrews, à jeter l'éponge il y a trois ans. Pour justifier cette décision, le chef du gouvernement de l'État avait mis en avant une facture devenue insoutenable : *"Le coût n'est pas de 2,6 milliards de dollars, comme l'estimaient les autorités responsables des Jeux du Commonwealth. En fait, c'est au moins 6, voire 7 milliards de dollars. Pour un événement sportif de 12 jours. On ne va pas le faire. Ce n'est pas un bon rapport qualité-prix. Tout cela coûte cher et n'apporte aucun avantage."*

"Plus de flexibilité"

Glasgow, déjà ville hôte en 2014, a alors pris le relais, à ses conditions : pas de village dédié aux sportifs par exemple, un tiers moins nombreux que d'habitude, mais aussi deux fois moins de disciplines. Avec ces changements, ces Jeux dans la ville écossaise seront presque cinq fois moins coûteux qu'à Birmingham il y a quatre ans. *"L'idée c'est d'avoir un événement qui puisse être prêt très rapidement"*, explique Quentin Ballue, rédacteur en chef du média *Francois Jeux*. *"Ce nouveau cadre d'organisation avec plus de flexibilité a permis déjà de dégager un autre pour 2030, ce sera l'Inde, qui vise aussi les Jeux olympiques et qui compte faire de cet événement un tremplin"*, précise-t-il.

Un modèle réduit plus rassurant pour de futurs candidats comme le Canada, le Nigeria ou la Nouvelle-Zélande, grande favorite pour l'édition 2034.

Final essay : "Is the Commonwealth still relevant today?"

Answer in 250 to 350 words – Use key words and relevant examples