

Britain and its people

Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1992

Migration

From 1986 to 1990 nearly 1.1 million people left Britain (excluding the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) to live abroad and about 1.2 million came from overseas to live in Britain, so that net immigration increased the population by about 99,000. (These figures exclude migration to and from the Irish Republic.)

In 1990 the total inflow of people intending to stay in Britain was 267,000, 7 per cent higher than in 1989. The outflow of people leaving to live abroad in 1990, at 231,000, was 11 per cent higher than in 1989.

Of the 231,000 departing residents in 1990:

- 26 per cent left for Australia, Canada or New Zealand;
- 12 per cent for other Commonwealth countries;
- 26 per cent for other European Community countries;
- 18 per cent for the United States;
- 4 per cent for the Middle East; and
- 4 per cent for South Africa.

Of the 267,000 new residents in 1990:

- 21 per cent came from Australia, Canada or New Zealand;
- 22 per cent from other Commonwealth countries;
- 25 per cent from other European Community countries;
- 11 per cent from the United States;
- 4 per cent from the Middle East; and
- 2 per cent from South Africa.

Nationality

Under the British Nationality Act 1981 there are three main forms of citizenship:

- British citizenship for people closely connected with Britain, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man;
- British Dependent Territories citizenship for people connected with the dependencies; and
- British Overseas citizenship for those citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies who did not acquire either of the other citizenships when the 1981 Act came into force.

British citizenship is acquired automatically at birth by a child born in Britain if his or her father or mother is a British citizen or is settled in Britain. A child adopted in Britain by a British citizen is a British citizen. A child born abroad to a British citizen born, adopted, naturalised or registered in Britain is a British citizen by descent. The Act safeguards the citizenship of a child born abroad to a British citizen in Crown Service, certain related services, or in service under a European Community institution.

British citizenship may also be acquired:

- by registration of certain children, including those born in Britain who do not automatically acquire such citizenship at birth or who have been born abroad to a parent who is a citizen by descent;
- by British Dependent Territories citizens, British Overseas citizens, British subjects under the Act (three very limited categories), and British Nationals (Overseas) and British protected persons after five years' residence in Britain (except for people from Gibraltar, who may be registered without residence); and
- by naturalisation for Commonwealth citizens, citizens of the Irish Republic, and foreign nationals who are aged 18 or over.

Naturalisation is at the Home Secretary's discretion: it requires five years' residence, good character, sound mind, the intention to have one's home in Britain thereafter and sufficient knowledge of English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic, except for the spouse of a British citizen, who needs only three years' residence and no language or future intentions qualification.

Legislation passed in 1983 conferred British citizenship on those Falkland Islanders who did not acquire it under the 1981 Act. Special arrangements covering the status of British Dependent Territories citizens connected with Hong Kong when the territory returns to the People's Republic of China in 1997 are made by the Hong Kong (British Nationality) Order 1986. Under this, such citizens are entitled, before 1997, to acquire a status known as British National (Overseas) and to hold a passport in that status. In addition, the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990 made provision for the registration as British citizens before 30 June 1997 of up to 50,000 persons who are able to meet certain criteria and who are recommended by the Governor.

In 1991, 58,642 people acquired citizenship by naturalisation or registration in Britain.

Immigration

Immigration into Britain is controlled under the Immigration Rules made in accordance with legislation passed in the 1970s and 1980s.

British citizens under the British Nationality Act 1981 and those Commonwealth citizens who had the right of abode before 1 January 1983 (when the 1981 Act came into force) maintain the right of abode and are not subject to immigration control. Those who do not have this right require permission to enter and remain in Britain: this is given in accordance with the Immigration Rules, which are subject to the scrutiny of Parliament and which set

out the requirements to be met by those seeking entry or to remain for a further period.

The nationals of certain specified countries must obtain a visa before they can enter Britain. Other nationals subject to immigration control require entry clearances when coming to work or to settle in Britain. Visas and other entry clearances are normally obtained from the nearest British diplomatic post in a person's home country.

In accordance with Britain's obligations under the Treaty of Rome, European Community nationals do not require entry clearances, nor are they subject to

restrictions on their freedom to take or seek work in Britain. Britain respects its obligations under the United Nations Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. These include granting refugees the right of access to courts and the right to work, education, social security and freedom of religion.

In 1991, 8.1 million foreign and Commonwealth nationals (excluding European Community nationals) were admitted to Britain and 53,900 persons were accepted for settlement.