

# Flags for Nations of the United Kingdom

Proposal to include Emoji Flags for England, Scotland and Wales



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# Introduction

The *United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland* is comprised of four nations, which each have their own distinct and internationally recognised flags which are not currently available as emoji.

Current flags are represented by region codes in CLDR, which are based on the ISO 3166-1<sup>1</sup> standard. If England, Scotland and Wales had their own ISO 3166-1 codes, they would already be represented.

The flags of England, Scotland and Wales are in widespread use in many international contexts, and these flags are already available as the only exceptions to the Unicode standard within WhatsApp.

We are requesting the addition of emoji flags for the nations of England, Scotland, and Wales.

## Notes

1. The flag of Northern Ireland currently holds no official status, and as such is not proposed for inclusion in this submission.
2. The terms "nation" and "country" are often used interchangeably to refer to England, Scotland and Wales.

## United Kingdom Summary

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) is a sovereign state lying off the north-western coast of the European mainland. Comprised of two islands, Britain and the isle of Ireland (of which only the north-eastern part - Northern Ireland - is considered part of the UK).

Four distinct nations make up the UK state; the largest is England, followed by Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## History of the United Kingdom

30,000 years in the making, the 'modern' history of the islands began with the Brythonic peoples - the forefathers of the Celts. The Roman conquest in 43 AD began the transformation of the islands of Britain and Ireland, subdividing them into separate Kingdoms and fiefdoms. Further conquests, notably in 1066, transformed boundaries and borders into something similar to that we see today.

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<sup>1</sup>ISO 3166-1 Standard [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISO\\_3166-1\\_alpha-2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISO_3166-1_alpha-2)

During the early 1900s, political movements on the isle of Ireland brought about partition, with a large proportion of the island seceding from the UK. Further political movements in the late 1900s devolved certain levels of home-rule government to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland - further strengthening their distinctness from their larger neighbour, England.

## England

With a population of circa 55 million people, England is by far the largest nation within the UK state. Its flag is the Saint George Cross, a red cross on a white background. England's main language is English, with a number of dialects spoken - particularly on the northern and southern edges.

## Scotland

With a population of 5 million, Scotland is the second most peopled nation in the UK, but perhaps the most geographically diverse. Scotland's flag is Saint Andrew's Cross (informally, the "Saltire") - a white X on a blue background. Comparable in size to the Czech Republic, Scotland has a powerful government, and in 2014 actively sought to secede from the UK by holding a referendum of citizens. Scots and Scottish Gaelic - both descendants of Brythonic and Celtic languages - is spoken by around 100,000 people.

## Wales

With a population of 3 million and lying on the western edge of Britain, Wales is a largely mountainous nation. Wales' flag is Y Ddraig Goch (English: "The Red Dragon"), a red dragon on a green and white field. The Welsh language (a descendant of the Brythonic language) holds official status in the country, and is spoken by an estimated 500,000 people, with a pocket of native speakers also residing in the Patagonia region of Argentina and Chile, South America.



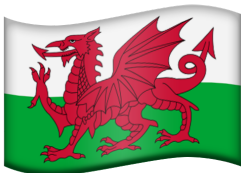
## Northern Ireland

With a population of 1.8 million people, Northern Ireland (NI) is on the north-eastern edge of the island of Ireland is the UK's smallest nation, and yet perhaps the most politically diverse given its turbulent history. NI's flag is the Saint Patrick's Cross, a red X on a white background. Due to political tensions, this flag has - since 1972 - held no official status.

# Proposal

We propose the addition of flags for England, Scotland and Wales as Unicode emoji.

## Emoji proposed

Name	Image (Colour)	ISO 3166-2 Code
Flag for England		GB-ENG
Flag for Scotland		GB-SCT
Flag for Wales		GB-WLS

## Implementation

We are requesting these flags be added to the Unicode Emoji Data Files as the following *Flag emoji tag sequences*<sup>2</sup>:

- gbeng ✦
- gbsct ✦
- gbwls ✦

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<sup>2</sup>Flag Emoji Tag Sequences / Proposed TR-51 5.0  
<http://www.unicode.org/reports/tr51/proposed.html#flag-emoji-tag-sequences>

# International Standing

Nations of the United Kingdom are frequently represented at international events with individual flags, rather than under the flag of the United Kingdom.

## 2016 UEFA European Championship

24 teams<sup>3</sup> competed in the 2016 UEFA European Championship. England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales each competed in qualifying rounds as distinct teams, rather than under the banner of the United Kingdom.

20 of the 24 competing nations and territories had their own flags available as emoji, with the only exceptions being:

- England
- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland



Above: Nations competing in the UEFA European Championship 2016

## 2015 Rugby World Cup

With attendance of 2,477,805 people, the Rugby World Cup 2015 had 20 nations competing. Every nation competing had an emoji representation of their flag, with the exceptions of:

- England
- Scotland
- Wales

<sup>3</sup>2016 UEFA European Championship Teams <http://www.uefa.com/uefaeuro/season=2016/teams/index.html>

#### Asia Rugby (1)

-  Japan (13)

#### Rugby Africa (2)

-  South Africa (3)
-  Namibia (20)

#### Sudamérica Rugby (2)

-  Argentina (8)
-  Uruguay (19)






#### NACRA (2)

-  Canada (18)
-  United States (15)

#### Rugby Europe (8)

-  England (4)
-  France (7)
-  Georgia (16)
-  Ireland (6)
-  Italy (14)
-  Romania (17)
-  Scotland (10)
-  Wales (5)

#### Oceania Rugby (5)

-  Australia (2)
-  Fiji (9)
-  New Zealand (1)
-  Samoa (12)
-  Tonga (11)

*Above: Nations competing in the 2015 Rugby World Cup. Examples of flags of England, Scotland and Wales being used in running text.*

## 2014 Commonwealth Games

71 nations and territories competed<sup>4</sup> at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each competed as distinct teams, rather than under the banner of the United Kingdom.

67 of the 71 competing nations and territories have their own flags available as emoji, with the only exceptions being:

- England
- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland














## NATIONS

71 NATIONS AND TERRITORIES. 2  
BILLION CITIZENS. 1 COMMONWEALTH  
FAMILY.

*Above: The 2014 Commonwealth Games described “71 nations and territories” competing in the games. All had emoji flag representation except England, Scotland, and Wales, Northern Ireland.*

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<sup>4</sup>Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games Competing Nations <http://g2014results.thecgf.com/nations.html>

RANK	NATIONS	MEN			WOMEN			MIXED			TOTAL			TOTAL
		GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	
1	 ENG	30	26	30	23	29	24	5	4	3	58	59	57	174
2	 AUS	22	23	20	26	19	23	1	0	3	49	42	46	137
3	 CAN	13	4	11	19	10	23	0	2	0	32	16	34	82
4	 SCO	13	7	10	6	7	7	0	1	2	19	15	19	53
5	 IND	9	17	9	6	13	10	0	0	0	15	30	19	64
6	 NZL	7	9	11	7	4	6	0	1	0	14	14	17	45
7	 RSA	9	7	13	2	2	4	2	1	0	13	10	17	40
8	 NGR	2	5	8	9	6	6	0	0	0	11	11	14	36
9	 KEN	4	6	2	6	4	3	0	0	0	10	10	5	25
10	 JAM	5	1	3	5	3	5	0	0	0	10	4	8	22
11	 SIN	3	4	2	5	1	1	0	0	1	8	5	4	17
12	 MAS	3	3	2	2	4	4	1	0	0	6	7	6	19
13	 WAL	1	1	13	4	10	7	0	0	0	5	11	20	36

Above: Medal tally for Commonwealth Games 2014. Examples showing the flags of England, Scotland and Wales in running text.

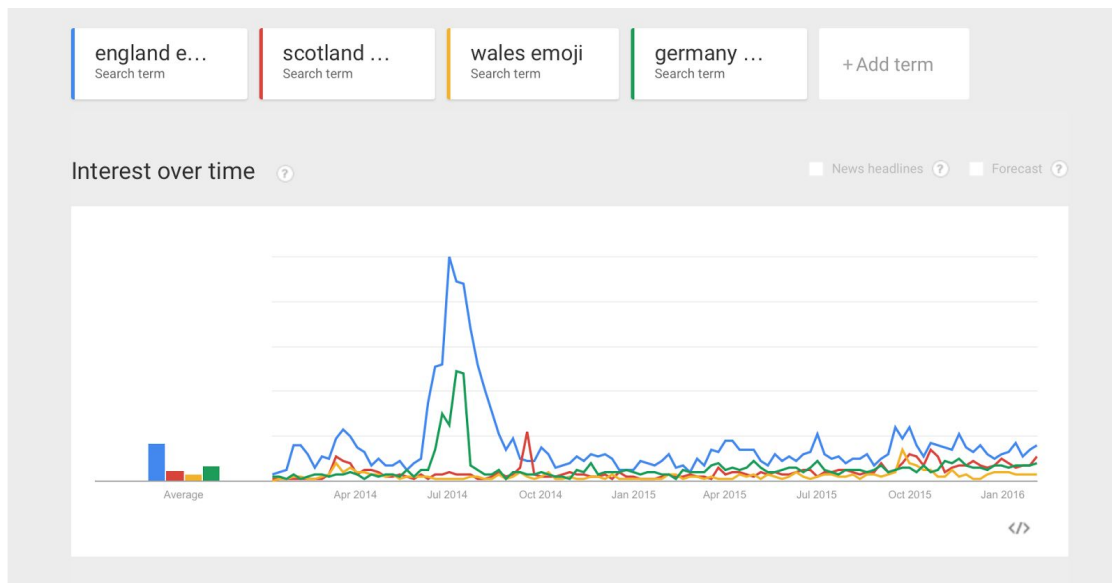
# Demand

Searches for emoji flags of England, Scotland and Wales are consistently high, and much higher if taking into account popularity of searches for these flags in a non-emoji context.

## Google Trends

Google Trends shows a considerably higher number of searches for *England+emoji* when compared to *Germany+emoji*. Germany was chosen as a country for comparison, due to the similar population to England and physical proximity in the world.

Scotland displayed a similar search frequency to Germany throughout 2015 despite a much smaller population.



- Germany population: 80 million
- England population: 55 million
- Scotland population: 5 million
- Wales population: 3 million

## Emojipedia

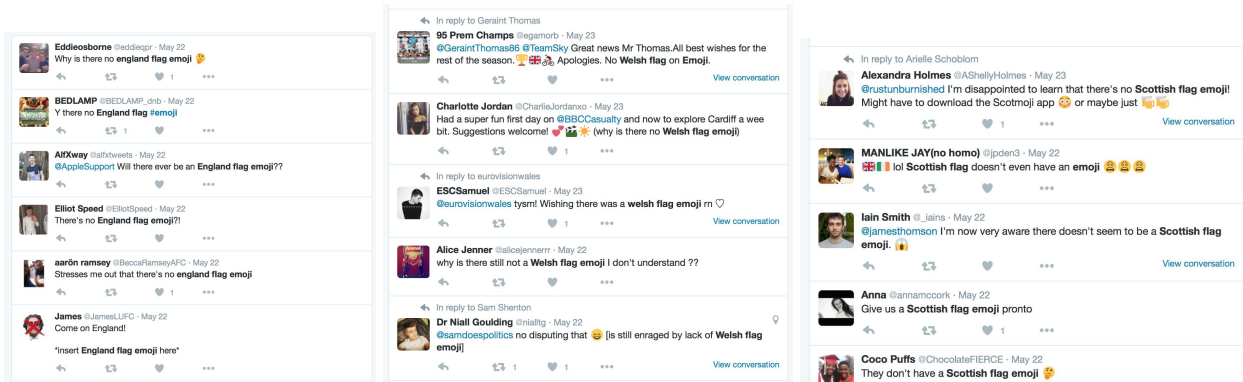
Searches on Emojipedia for the flags proposed within this document display direct intent of the searcher to use the emoji searched. This data is for direct searches on Emojipedia.org, as data is not available for flag detail pages of non-existent characters. Data is for June 2016:

- England/English: 1,431
- German/Germany: 928
- Welsh/Wales: 715
- Scotland/Scottish: 492



# Twitter

Demand for these flags is shown daily on Twitter, with multiple tweets every day requesting emoji flags for England, Scotland, and Wales.



*Above: Searches such as “english flag emoji” “saltire emoji” + “red dragon emoji” are very frequent on Twitter.*

Searches using these phrases show 5-100 requests for each flag daily on Twitter alone:

## England

- <https://twitter.com/search?f=tweets&vertical=default&q=england%20flag%20emoji>
- <https://twitter.com/search?q=english%20flag%20emoji>
- <https://twitter.com/search?q=st%20george's%20cross%20emoji>

## Scotland

- <https://twitter.com/search?q=scotland%20flag%20emoji>
- <https://twitter.com/search?q=scottish%20flag%20emoji>
- <https://twitter.com/search?q=saltire%20emoji>

## Wales

- <https://twitter.com/search?q=wales%20flag%20emoji>
- <https://twitter.com/search?q=welsh%20flag%20emoji>
- <https://twitter.com/search?q=red%20dragon%20emoji>

# Alternatives

Use of country flags is common in many forms of communication, and the flags of England, Scotland and Wales often require workarounds due to the lack of appropriate flag emoji.

Many high profile accounts have substituted non-flag emoji characters for these three nations when displayed alongside country flags. Individual flags for England, Scotland, and Wales would resolve this issue.

## FIFA Women's World Cup

FIFA Women's World Cup used U+1F981 LION FACE emoji to display "England" due to no Flag for England emoji available.

<https://twitter.com/FIFAWWC/status/746251804246171648>

2016/06/24



FIFA Women's World Cup  
@FIFAWWC



Follow

### FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD RANKING

- 1 🇺🇸
- 2 🇩🇪
- 3 🇫🇷
- 4 🦁
- 5 🇦🇺
- 6 🇸🇪
- 7 🇯🇵
- 8 🇧🇷
- 9 🇰🇵
- 10 🇨🇦

RANK	TEAM	POINTS	+/- POSITION
1	USA	2168	0 ⬆️
2	GERMANY	2115	0 ⬆️
3	FRANCE	2064	0 ⬆️
4	ENGLAND	2021	0 ⬆️
5	AUSTRALIA	2011	0 ⬆️
6	SWEDEN	2002	0 ⬆️
7	JAPAN	1991	0 ⬆️
8	BRAZIL	1982	0 ⬆️
9	KOREA DPR	1952	0 ⬆️
10	CANADA	1938	0 ⬆️

More here: [fifa.to/28TV4tw](http://fifa.to/28TV4tw)

## Gareth Bale

Football Association of Wales player Gareth Bale used U+1F432 DRAGON FACE emoji as a substitute for a Welsh Flag emoji when tweeting to his 8 million followers about Wales in the European Championship.

<https://twitter.com/GarethBale11/status/745004799784062977>

2016/06/20



Gareth Bale   
@GarethBale11



 Follow

WAAAAAAAALESS 🦖🦖🦖🦖



## Media reports

There has been a continual, ongoing demand for emoji flags of England, Scotland and Wales which has been documented in the media as far back as 2014. A selection of articles is noted below.

### **The new batch of emojis is about to appear but there's still no Welsh flag**

<http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/new-batch-emojis-appear-theres-11416315>

### **England, Wales And Scotland Don't Get Their Own Apple Emoji Flags**

<http://www.shortlist.com/tech/england-wales-and-scotland-dont-get-their-own-apple-emoji-flags>

### **Apple fails to release Scotland and Wales flag emoji but does make one for North Korea**

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/technology-science/technology/apple-fails-release-scotland-wales-6487508>

### **There's an emoji flag for Antarctica but not Wales or Scotland. Thanks, Apple**

<http://indy100.independent.co.uk/article/theres-an-emoji-flag-for-antarctica-but-not-wales-or-scotland-thanks-apple--ZJGH2u29cUI>

### **Footie fans demand Wales flag emoji to cheer on Euro 2016 squad**

<http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/528064/Euro-2016-footie-fans-demand-Wales-flag-emoji>

### **Alex Salmond's disappointment over another snub for Saltire emoji**

Former first minister of Scotland Alex Salmond stated:

*"Last year, I wrote to both Apple and the Unicode Consortium, asking them to consider including the Saltire in their next update. I am disappointed that that once again Scotland has been left out, along with our neighbours in England and in also in Wales"*

<https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/politics/186042/salmond-calls-for-an-emoji-for-the-saltire/>

# Selection Factors

## Factors for Inclusion

### Compatibility

*Flag for England* is included in WhatsApp alongside standard Unicode flag characters.

WhatsApp uses the regional indicator pair *XE* to display this emoji flag which is supported on iOS, Android and Windows versions of WhatsApp.

When the English flag emoji is viewed outside of the WhatsApp application, it shows as the characters *XE*, creating a compatibility issue.

WhatsApp has over 1 billion monthly active users<sup>5</sup> with access to this emoji flag.



Above: WhatsApp for Android has the *Flag for England* on its emoji keyboard (lower right)<sup>6</sup>

## Expected Usage level

### Frequency

Expected frequency of use for this emoji is very high.

- Statistics show a high level of demand for these emojis on Google Trends, Twitter, and Emojipedia
- Other emoji flags see considerable use, especially during national or international events

### Multiple usages

Flags for these countries may be used in a variety of contexts:

- Sporting events

<sup>5</sup> WhatsApp Monthly Users <http://venturebeat.com/2016/02/01/whatsapp-passes-1-billion-monthly-active-users/>

<sup>6</sup> WhatsApp Android Screenshot <https://twitter.com/hashflaglist/status/477238617518407680>

- National days
- Travel

## Image distinctiveness

- All three flags are individually distinct

## Completeness

- No other flags see as frequent use in an international context in running text alongside other nation flags

## Frequently requested

Previously shown in this document, these flags are requested frequently in a wide range of places:

- Emojipedia top requests 2016
- Twitter users
- Media reports
- High profile individuals and organisations using alternatives to these flags

## Factors for Exclusion

### Overly specific

These flags are not overly specific, and will be used by millions of people within each country.

### Open-ended

The flags of England, Scotland, and Wales are some of the most prominent flags that don't have emoji representation. No other non-encoded flags see as frequent use in an international context in running text alongside other nation flags.

### Already Representable

The Flag of United Kingdom represents three countries, but none individually. Attempts to represent these countries with existing emoji characters is not a practical alternative.

### Logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people, deities

These flags are not logos, brands, UI icons.

### Transient

These flags are not transient, any more than other country flags implemented using Regional Indicators.

# Acknowledgements

Jeremy Burge (Emojipedia) and Owen Williams (BBC Wales) created this proposal.

Mark Davis (Google Inc.) and Peter Edberg (Apple Inc.) created Unicode® Technical Standard #52 which outlines the method of supporting subregion flags noted in this document.

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Thanks also to Mark Davis, James Thomson and Paul Hunt who provided feedback during the creation of this document.