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Country names

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General guidance

In general, for countries with complex names use contemporary English terms and an accepted short form rather than the full name (e.g. 'United Kingdom' or 'UK' rather than 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland').

When reporting the country or region of a study, use the terminology used in the studies and, if possible, place it in contemporary context, being sure to reflect changes in borders and names accurately (e.g. 'the study was conducted in Yugoslavia (i.e. Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro at the time of writing; YYYY)' or 'the study was conducted in the Czech Republic (part of Czechoslovakia at the time of the study; YYYY)' if you know that the studies were conducted in that region).

Specific examples

The Netherlands: use 'the Netherlands' in running text but 'The Netherlands' at the start of headings or sentences.

USA: use 'USA' or 'the USA' (as appropriate) in running text when referring to the United States of America; other forms may be used when part of specific names, e.g. the 'US Food and Drug Administration'.

Abbreviations

For more information on abbreviations of country names, see [Common abbreviations that do not need to be defined](#).

Further resources

These resources may be helpful:

- [Wikipedia: List of sovereign states](#)
- [UK Government Permanent Committee on Geographical Names: Country names](#)