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**Attention: -**

3 pages

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## **Bank Holiday Fact File**

England, Scotland and Wales all have eight public holidays per year, whilst Northern Ireland has ten.

The TUC last successfully campaigned for more public holidays in the 1970s. Before that, England and Wales had six public holidays; Scotland had five and Northern Ireland eight. Our campaign was influential in persuading the government of the day of the merits of the case. The result was the introduction of two new bank holidays throughout the UK and a further additional day in Scotland.

About a third of full-time employees work on at least one public holiday in the year. 16-19 year olds are the age group most likely to work on public holidays. Agriculture and fisheries is the industrial sector most likely to work on a public holiday. About half work on at least one public holiday last year.

Prior to 1834, the Bank of England observed about thirty-three saints' days and religious festivals as holidays, but in 1834, this was drastically reduced to just four: Good Friday, 1st May, 1st November, and Christmas Day.

Bank holidays were first introduced by the Bank Holidays Act of 1871, which designated four holidays in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and five in Scotland. These were Easter Monday, the first Monday in August, the 26th December, and Whit Monday (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and New Year's Day, Good Friday, the first Monday in May, the first Monday in August, and Christmas Day (Scotland). In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, both Christmas Day and Good Friday were traditional days of rest and Christian worship (as were Sundays) and did not need to be included in the Act.

The act was introduced by Sir John Lubbock, the 1st Lord and Baron Avebury, (30th April, 1834-28th May, 1913), English banker, politician, naturalist and archaeologist. He was the first president of the Institute of Bankers and in 1865 Lubbock published what was probably the most influential archaeological text book of the 19th Century, *Pre-historic Times, as Illustrated by Ancient Remains, and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages*, and was responsible for inventing the names Palaeolithic and Neolithic to denote the Old and New Stone Ages respectively.

Two additional days were subsequently appointed in Northern Ireland: St Patrick's Day (17 March) by a special Act of Parliament in 1903 and 12 July (Anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne in 1690), by the Governor of Northern Ireland in 1926.

The 1871 Act was repealed 100 years later and its provisions incorporated into the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971, which remains the statutory basis for bank holidays. The following changes were introduced both then and subsequently: 1971 - Whit Monday in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (which could fall anywhere between 11 May and 14 June) was formally replaced by a fixed spring holiday on the last Monday in May. The last Monday in August was formally made a bank holiday in place of the first Monday in August in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In both cases, this followed a trial period of the new arrangements between 1965 and 1970.

1973 - 2 January was created an additional bank holiday in Scotland by the 1971 Act. However, the provision did not come into effect until 1973.

1974 - New Year's Day became an additional bank holiday in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and Boxing Day became an additional bank holiday in Scotland.

1978 - the first Monday in May in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the last Monday in May in Scotland, became additional bank holidays.

Bank holidays designated since the 1971 Act are appointed each year by Royal Proclamation.

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

- All TUC press releases can be found at [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)
- Register for the TUC's press extranet: a service exclusive to journalists wanting to access pre-embargo releases and reports from the TUC. Visit [www.tuc.org.uk/pressextranet](http://www.tuc.org.uk/pressextranet)

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