

Six Dimensions of the Nation Brands IndexSM 2020

International Perceptions of Northern Ireland: Exports

11 March 2021

This bulletin is part of a series of six. The others are available on [the TEO website](#).

Key findings

- In 2020, Northern Ireland ranked 25th of 50 for the Exports dimension (up one place since 2019). Exports was Northern Ireland's 3rd lowest ranked dimension.
- Northern Ireland's score for Exports decreased to 54.48 in 2020 (-0.11 since 2019). The Exports dimension scored higher than it has in some previous years (2016 and 2018) but it remains Northern Ireland's lowest scoring dimension.
- Exports received significantly higher scores from those who had visited Northern Ireland than those who had not.
- When asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with attribute statements, large proportions of respondents (more than 50 per cent) felt neutral about all three attribute statements for the Exports dimension.
- In 2020, the largest change in rank for Exports was from China, who ranked Northern Ireland seven places higher; Egypt ranked Northern Ireland two places lower in 2020 than in 2019.

Introduction

In order to assess and monitor its international reputation, Northern Ireland has been included on the Nation Brands IndexSM (NBISM) each year since 2016. The NBI measures and ranks the reputations of 50 nations across Six Dimensions: Exports; Governance; Culture; People; Tourism; and Immigration and Investment.

This bulletin examines Northern Ireland's reputation in relation to **Exports**. The score for the Exports dimension is calculated using scores from three attributes. For each attribute, survey participants were presented with a statement and asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed on a seven point Likert scale. As seen below, the "buy products" statement was presented slightly differently.

Attribute	Statement
Science & Technology	'This country makes a major contribution to innovation in science and technology.'
Buy Products	'Imagine you are about to buy a product when you notice that it is made in Northern Ireland. Please indicate whether you think this would make you feel less good/the same/better about buying it.'
Creative Place	'This country is a creative place with cutting-edge ideas and new ways of thinking.'

The score for the Exports dimension is out of 100, while the score for each of the attributes is based on a scale from one to seven (with seven being the highest and best, and one being the lowest and worst). 50 countries are included in the NBI; rankings presented in the report show Northern Ireland's position among these 50 countries.

Northern Ireland's score on the Exports dimension (54.48) was lower in 2020 than in 2019. Its rank improved by one place (25th).

Figure 1: Northern Ireland's ranking and score on the Exports dimension of the NBI



Rankings and scores on the Exports dimension from around the world

Exports was Northern Ireland's 3rd lowest ranked dimension in 2020.

Northern Ireland's Exports dimension received reasonable ranks globally (Figure 2). Northern Ireland received top half rankings (25th or higher) from 10 of the 20 panel nations. This is an increase from 2019 but fairly consistent with previous years.

The highest rankings were received from China (18th), the United Kingdom (20th) and France (22nd). Northern Ireland's lowest rankings were received from India (38th) and Egypt (37th). The overall Exports rank rose by one place from 2019 to 2020, and a similar trend was displayed by the individual panel countries. Only two panel countries gave Northern Ireland a lower rank for Exports than in 2019, while 12 ranked Northern Ireland higher and six gave the same rank as in 2019.

The largest change in rank for Exports was from China, who ranked Northern Ireland seven places higher; Egypt ranked Northern Ireland two places lower in 2020 than in 2019.

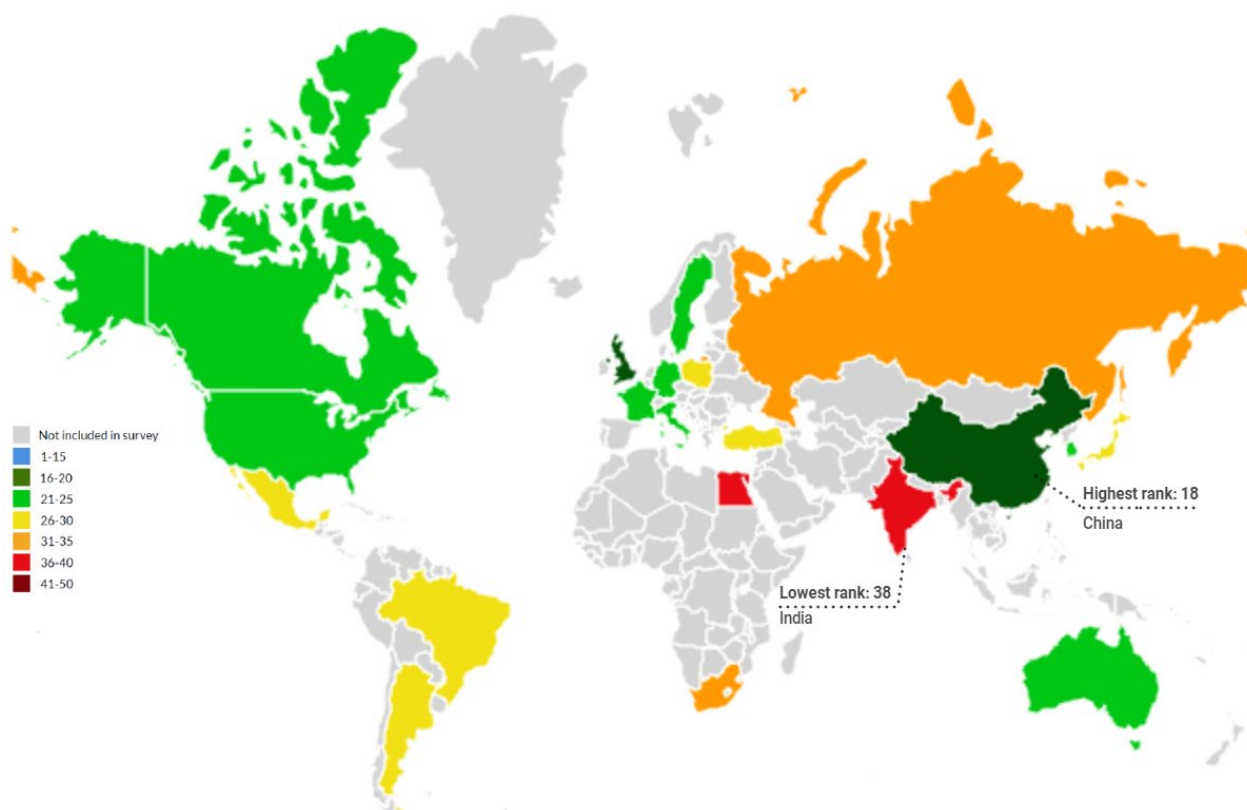
While rankings provide an insight into how Northern Ireland is viewed by panel countries relative to the other participating nations, they can be impacted year on year due to the inclusion of new countries in the survey. The dimension score provides a more absolute understanding of how Northern Ireland is viewed, both overall and by each of the individual panel countries. In this sense, it is useful to consider both rankings and scores.

Overall, the Exports dimension scored higher than it has in some previous years (2016 and 2018) but it remains Northern Ireland's lowest scoring dimension.

The highest score was received from China (68.01) with a relatively high score also received from India (64.61) in 2020. Northern Ireland's lowest scores were received from Japan (48.74), South Korea (49.85), Turkey (50.13) and Sweden (50.37).

Northern Ireland received a relatively high rank (24th) but low score (50.37) from Sweden, which contrasts with the low rank (38th) but high score (64.61) received from India. This suggests that scores from different panel countries are not necessarily comparable, again, highlighting the importance of considering both score and rank when evaluating responses from other countries.

Figure 2: Northern Ireland's rankings on the Exports dimension from around the world

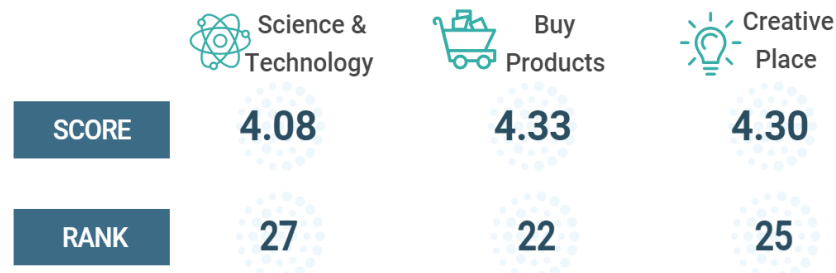


Attribute scores and rankings

The score for each attribute is an average of participants' scores, on a scale from one (lowest and worst) to seven (highest and best) with four being neither positive nor negative.

Northern Ireland's attribute scores on the Exports dimension have been positive (i.e. above the neutral value of 4) each year since Northern Ireland was included in 2016. The highest scoring Exports attribute in 2020 was "buy products" (4.33). The "science and technology" attribute is consistently the lowest scoring and lowest ranking in the Exports dimension. In 2020, as in previous years, it had one of the lowest scores in any dimension (4.08). Out of the 50 nations examined, Northern Ireland was ranked between 22nd and 27th for the Exports attributes.

Figure 3: Rankings and scores for Northern Ireland's Export attributes



Note: Attribute scores range from 1 to 7 and all rankings are out of 50.

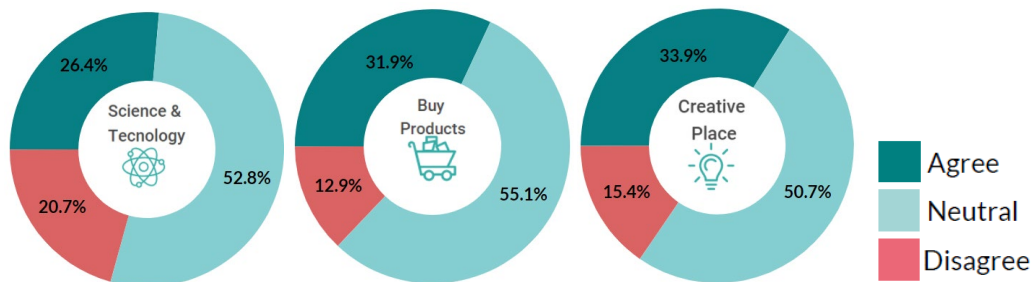
Proportion of participants who agreed or disagreed with each Exports attribute statement

It is also useful to consider the proportion of participants who either agreed or disagreed with each attribute statement¹ (see Figure 4). More than a third of participants agreed that Northern Ireland is a creative place (34 per cent) and just under a third (32 per cent) indicated that they would feel better about buying a product knowing that it was made in Northern Ireland.

Across all 23 attributes, the lowest agreement rate was with the statement that Northern Ireland makes a major contribution to innovation in science and technology (26 per cent).

More than half of participants provided a neutral response in relation to each of the attributes within the Exports dimension. These neutral proportions were higher for the three Exports attributes than for all other attributes. This could suggest that participants did not feel informed enough to agree or disagree confidently regarding Northern Ireland's contribution to innovation in science and technology, the appeal of its products or its creativity. The proportions for the attributes within the Exports dimension are all similar to those observed in previous years. All three attributes received lower agreement rates in 2020 than in 2019.

Figure 4: Proportion of participants who agreed or disagreed with each attribute statement in the Exports dimension



Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

¹ For each attribute statement, survey participants reported to what extent they agreed or disagreed on a seven point Likert scale. These are converted to scores, where one to three were categorised as 'disagree', four as 'neutral', and five to seven as 'agree'.

Products and services associated with Northern Ireland

Participants were asked to select, from a predetermined list, the products or services they most associated with Northern Ireland (participants could choose more than one response). The most common response was 'none of these' (46 per cent of participants). Across all Six Dimensions, this was the highest proportion of 'none of these' responses. Figure 5 presents adjectives chosen by remaining participants. The product or service most commonly associated with Northern Ireland was 'Agriculture' (22 per cent), followed by 'Food' (17 per cent) and 'Crafts' (13 per cent). These proportions were similar to those observed in 2019.

Figure 5: Products or services associated with Northern Ireland

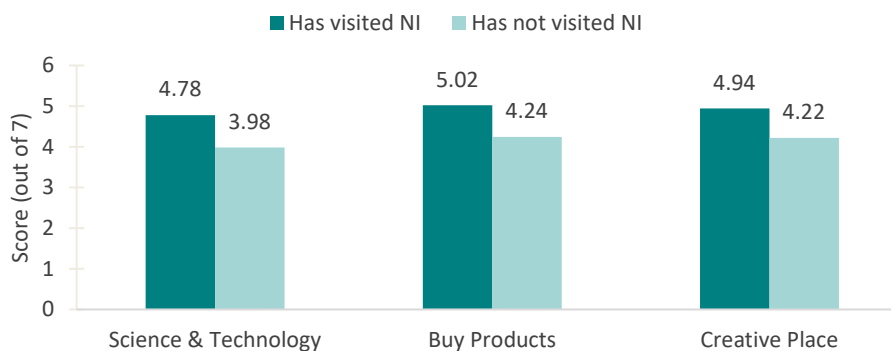


Visitors to Northern Ireland

In 2020, 12 per cent of NBI participants reported that they had previously visited Northern Ireland.

Participants who had previously visited the region scored Northern Ireland statistically significantly² higher on the Exports dimension (65.58) than those who had not visited (52.87). This was also the case for each of the composite attributes (Figure 6). This pattern was also evident in all previous survey years.

Figure 6: Attribute scores (those who have visited Northern Ireland and those who have not)



Further Information and Feedback

Further information can be found in the [overall report](#) (published February 2021) which includes data tables and methodological documents.

Feedback on these publications is gratefully received, and can be provided through our [User Feedback Survey](#) or by contacting: Emma Morgan, pfganalytics@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk.

² Statistically significant differences are at the 95% confidence level. This means that we can be 95% confident that the differences between groups are actual differences and have not just arisen by chance.