

Six Dimensions of the Nation Brands IndexSM 2021

International Perceptions of Northern Ireland: Exports

16 February 2022

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

Key findings

- In 2021, Northern Ireland ranked 27th of 60 for the Exports dimension (down two places since 2020). Exports was Northern Ireland's 3rd lowest ranked dimension.
- In 2021, 18 out of 19 panel nations¹ ranked Northern Ireland the same or lower for Exports. The positive change in rank came from Italy, who ranked Northern Ireland one place higher than 2020.
- Northern Ireland's score for Exports increased to 56.42 in 2021 (+1.94 since 2020). The Exports dimension received its highest score in 2021 but it remains Northern Ireland's lowest scoring dimension.
- Compared with 2020, 17 of 19 panel countries scored Northern Ireland higher for Exports.
- Exports received significantly higher scores from those who had visited Northern Ireland than those who had not.

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 60 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). As of 2021, there are 60 countries included in the NBI; rankings presented in the report show Northern Ireland's position among these 60 countries. Between 2016 and 2020, there were 50 countries included in the NBI.

Northern Ireland's score on the Exports dimension (56.42) was higher in 2021 than in 2020. However, its rank decreased by two places (27th).

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



¹ In 2021, Saudi Arabia replaced Egypt as a panel nation, meaning comparisons were only possible for 19 nations.

Overall, the Exports dimension received its highest ever score in 2021 but it continues to be the lowest scoring dimension in each year since Northern Ireland was included. Exports was Northern Ireland's 3rd lowest ranking dimension in 2021.

Figure 2: Northern Ireland's score and rank on the Exports dimension (2016-2021)

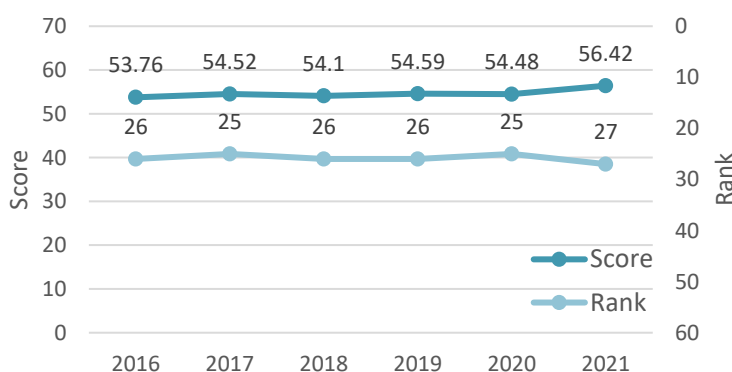


Figure 2 shows Northern Ireland's score and rank change over time for the Exports dimension.

The time series highlights that although Northern Ireland received their lowest rank in 2021, they also received their highest ever score on this dimension in 2021. This reflects the importance of considering both score and rank.

Note: A lower rank and a higher score is better.

Rankings and scores on the Exports dimension from around the world

Northern Ireland's Exports dimension received reasonable ranks globally (Figure 3). Northern Ireland received top half rankings (30th or higher) from 14 of the 20 panel nations. This is an increase from 10 panel nations in 2020.

The highest rankings were received from United Kingdom (22nd), Italy (23rd) and France (23rd). Northern Ireland's lowest rankings were received from China (56th) and Saudi Arabia (41st). The overall Exports rank fell by two places from 2020 to 2021, and a similar trend was displayed by the individual panel countries as 18 out of 19 countries gave Northern Ireland a lower rank or the same rank as 2020.

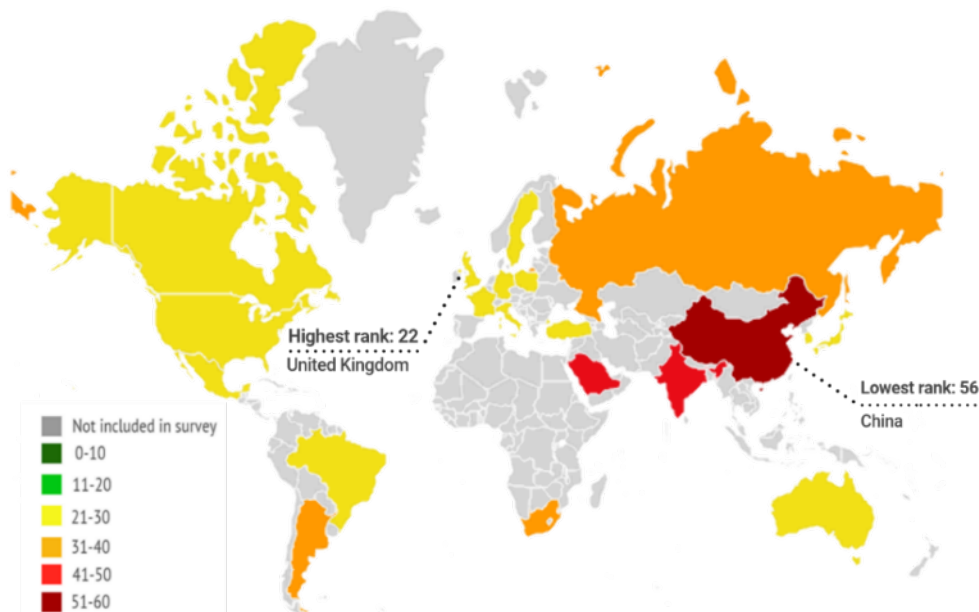
The largest change in rank for Exports was from China, who ranked Northern Ireland 38 places lower in 2021 than in 2020. Italy was the only country to rank Northern Ireland higher in 2021 than in 2020, (up one place).

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. There were 10 new countries added in 2021, meaning Northern Ireland was ranked out of 60 countries instead of 50. 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.

Northern Ireland scored higher in 17 out of 19 panel countries for exports compared to 2020. The highest score was received from India (71.76). Northern Ireland's lowest scores were received from Japan (48.47), Sweden (50.57), and South Korea (50.60).

Northern Ireland received its lowest rank from China (56th) in 2021, however the second highest score awarded to this dimension came from China at 63.03. This contrasts with the relatively high rank (27th) but low score (48.47) received from Japan. 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 3: Northern Ireland's rankings on the Exports dimension from around the world

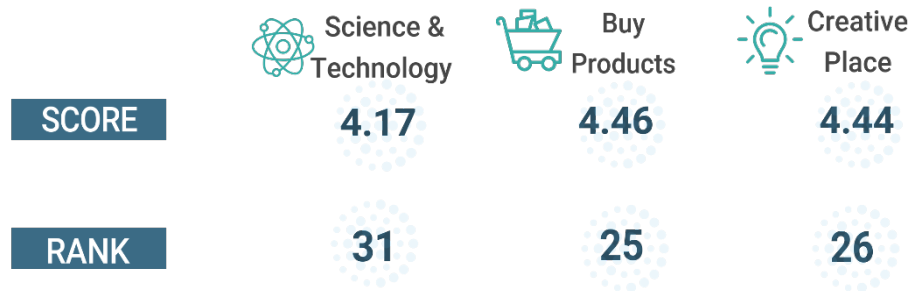


Attribute scores and rankings

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 2021 was "buy products" (4.46) for the second year in a row. The "science and technology" attribute is consistently the lowest scoring and lowest ranking in the Exports dimension. In 2021, as in previous years, it had one of the lowest scores in any dimension (4.17).

Figure 4: Rankings and scores for Northern Ireland's Export attributes



Note: Attribute scores range from 1 to 7 and all rankings are out of 60.

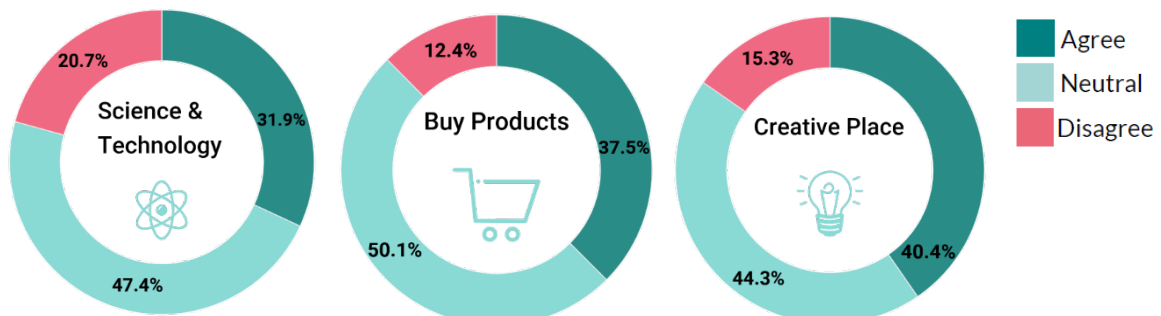
Proportion of participants who agreed or disagreed with each Exports attribute statement

It is also useful to consider the proportion of participants who either agreed or disagreed with each attribute statement² (Figure 5).

The proportions for the attributes within the Exports dimension are all similar to those observed in previous years. However, the agreement rate for all three attributes increased in 2021 compared with 2020. Two fifths of participants agreed that Northern Ireland is a creative place (40 per cent) and just under two fifths (38 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 (32 per cent). However, this is up 6 percentage points from 2020.

The Exports dimension has some of the highest proportions of neutral responses across the six dimensions, with "buy products" having the highest of all 23 attributes (50 per cent). Despite this, the proportions of participants providing neutral responses for the attributes within the Exports dimension decreased from 2020, which could indicate participants felt more informed in 2021 in order to agree or disagree confidently regarding Northern Ireland's contribution to innovation in science and technology, the appeal of its products and its creativity.

Figure 5: 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.

² 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' (37 per cent of participants). Across all Six Dimensions, this was the highest proportion of 'none of these' responses. Figure 6 presents adjectives chosen by remaining participants. The product or service most commonly associated with Northern Ireland was 'Agriculture' (25 per cent), followed by 'Food' (19 per cent) and 'Crafts' (15 per cent).

Figure 6: Products or services associated with Northern Ireland

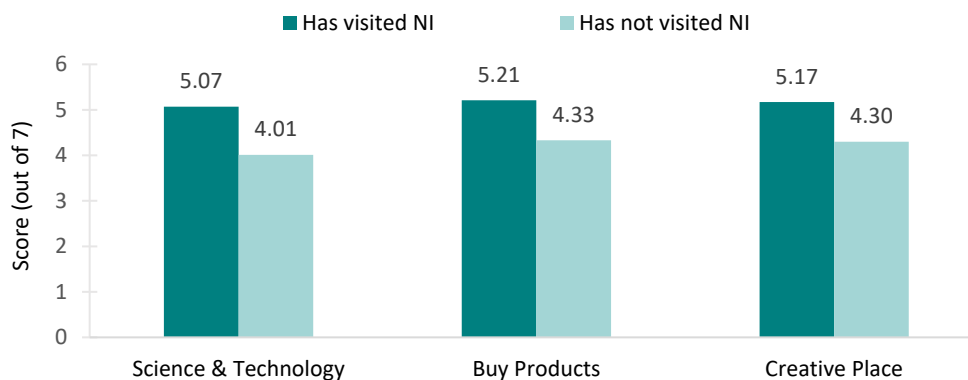


Visitors to Northern Ireland

In 2021, 16 per cent of NBI participants reported that they had previously visited Northern Ireland.

Participants who had previously visited Northern Ireland, awarded a score statistically significantly³ higher on the Exports dimension (69.47) than those who had not visited (53.98). This was also the case for each of the composite attributes (Figure 7). This pattern was also evident in all previous survey years, however there was an increase overall and across all three attributes in 2021 compared to 2020.

Figure 7: 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 December 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: Chelsea Chambers, pfganalytics@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk.

³ 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.