International Perceptions of Northern Ireland: Tourism
The Anholt-GFK Roper Nation Brands Index[SM], 2016
May 2017

Introduction

In order to assess and monitor its international reputation, Northern Ireland was included on the Anholt GfK-Roper Nation Brands Index[SM] (NBI[SM]) for the first time in 2016.

The NBI[SM] is an analytical tool which measures and ranks the broad international reputation of 50 nations, across six dimensions of national competence: Exports; Governance; Culture; People; Tourism; and Immigration and Investment

The 2016 NBI[SM] involved the completion of over 20,000 online surveys, across 20 major developed and developing panel countries, with at least 1,000 surveys per panel country.

This bulletin examines how Northern Ireland is viewed in relation to the Tourism dimension. The score for this dimension was calculated using scores from four questions (attributes): Visit if Money was No Object; Natural Beauty; Historic Buildings; and Vibrant City Life. For each attribute, respondents were presented with a statement and asked to state to what extent they agree or disagree on a seven point Likert scale, where 1 is strongly disagree, 4 is neither agree nor disagree, and 7 is strongly agree. Table 1 presents these statements.[1]

Table 1: Attribute statements, Tourism dimension.

Attribute	Statements
Visit if Money was No Object	'Please give each country a rating from 1 to 7 where 7 means you would 'strongly like to visit' if money was no object and 1 means you would 'strongly not like to visit' if money was no object.'
Natural Beauty	'This country is rich in natural beauty.'
Historic Buildings	'This country is rich in historic buildings and monuments.'
Vibrant City Life	'This country has a vibrant city life and urban attractions.'

All rankings presented in the report are out of 50. The overall score for the Tourism dimension is indexed to 100, while the score for each of the attributes are averaged from respondents' scores, based on a scale from 1 to 7 (with 7 being the highest and best, and 1 being the lowest and worst).

The overall published report, associated data tables and accompanying methodological document are available from: https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/anholt-gfk-roper-nation-brands-index-2016-report-northern-ireland.

Northern Ireland's NBI[SM] Score and Ranking for the Tourism dimension

Northern Ireland received an overall NBI[SM] score of 63.27 on the Tourism dimension. When this score was compared to the other participating nations it resulted in Northern Ireland ranking of 28th out of the 50 nations examined. Tourism was Northern Ireland's strongest performing dimension in terms of overall score but second lowest in terms of ranking.

Figure 1: Overall ranking and score for Northern Ireland's Tourism

[1] For the 'Would Visit if Money was no Object' attribute the anchoring words were as follows: 7 meant respondents would 'strongly like to visit' if money was no object; 1 meant respondents would 'strongly not like to visit'; while a score of 4 reflected a neutral perception towards visiting Northern Ireland if money was no object.

## Tourism rankings and scores from around the world

Northern Ireland's Tourism dimension received a wide range of rankings globally, with a number of the highest rankings received from European and Anglo-American nations (Figure 2). The highest overall ranking was received from Italy (15th), Germany (16th), France (18th) and the United Kingdom (18th). Northern Ireland's lowest rankings were received from Argentina (34th), India (36th) and Egypt (40th).

While rankings provide an insight into how Northern Ireland is viewed by panel countries relative to the other participating nations, the overall dimension score provides a more absolute understanding of how Northern Ireland is viewed in relation to Tourism, both overall and by each of the individual panel countries. In this sense, it is useful to consider both rankings and scores.

Northern Ireland's highest score was received from Mexico (67.53), with relatively high scores also received from India (66.26), Germany (66.08), South Africa (65.76) and Brazil (65.14). Northern Ireland's lowest scores were received from Sweden (60.72), South Korea (58.58), and Japan (54.78).

Northern Ireland's moderate ranking (27th) and low score (54.78) from Japan, contrasts with the relatively low ranking (36th) and high score (66.26) from India. This suggests that the distribution of scores varies across different panel countries.

Figure 2: Northern Ireland Tourism rankings from around the world
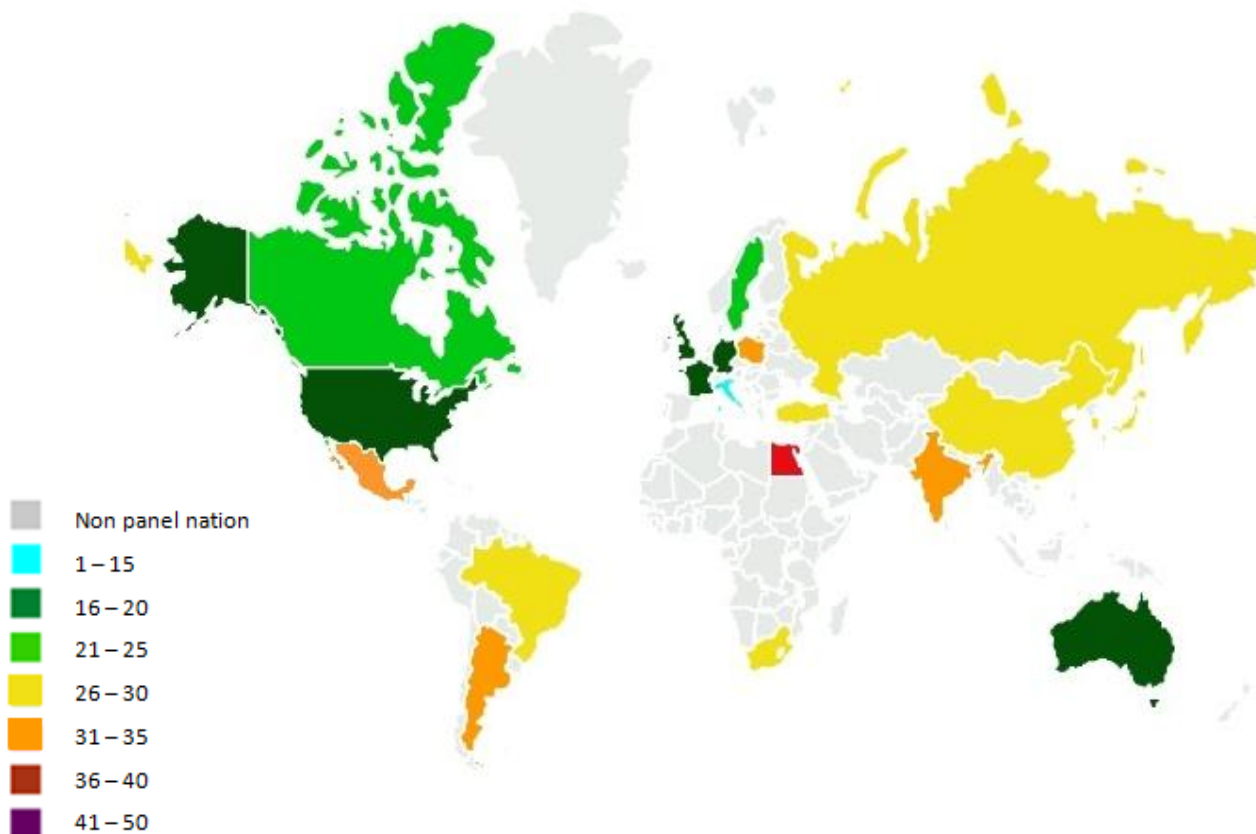
Attribute scores and rankings

The score for each attribute was averaged from respondents' scores, based on a scale from 1 to 7 (with 7 being the highest and best, 1 being the lowest and worst, and 4 being the middle position which is neither positive or negative).

Northern Ireland's overall score for each attribute on the Tourism dimension was noted to be positive (i.e. above the neutral value of 4) and ranged from 4.60 (Vibrant City Life) to 5.05 (Natural Beauty). The score for Natural Beauty was the highest Northern Ireland received for any of the 23 attributes of the NBI[SM].

Attribute scores were then ranked relative to the performance of the other nations examined. Northern Ireland was ranked highly in relation to Natural Beauty (23rd) and respondents' willingness to visit if money was no object (21st). Lower rankings were received for Historic Buildings (31st) and Vibrant City Life (28th) (Figure 3).

Attributes of the Tourism dimension: Proportion of respondents who agreed or disagreed with each attribute statement

As well as examining the overall scores and ranks, it was also possible to consider the proportion of respondents who agreed or disagreed with each attribute statement[2].

A large proportion of respondents indicated that they would be willing to visit Northern Ireland if money was no object (59.5%) and agreed that Northern Ireland was rich in natural beauty (61.7%). These were the highest levels of agreement for any of the 23 attribute statements of the NBI[SM].

Figure 3: Attribute rankings and score

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

A relatively large proportion of respondents also agreed that Northern Ireland was rich with historic buildings (47.2%) and had a vibrant city life (45.3%).

For three of the four attribute statements less than 11% of respondents disagreed, while a larger proportion of respondents (17.4%) indicated that they would not like visit Northern Ireland if money was no object (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Proportion of respondents who agreed or disagreed with each attribute statement
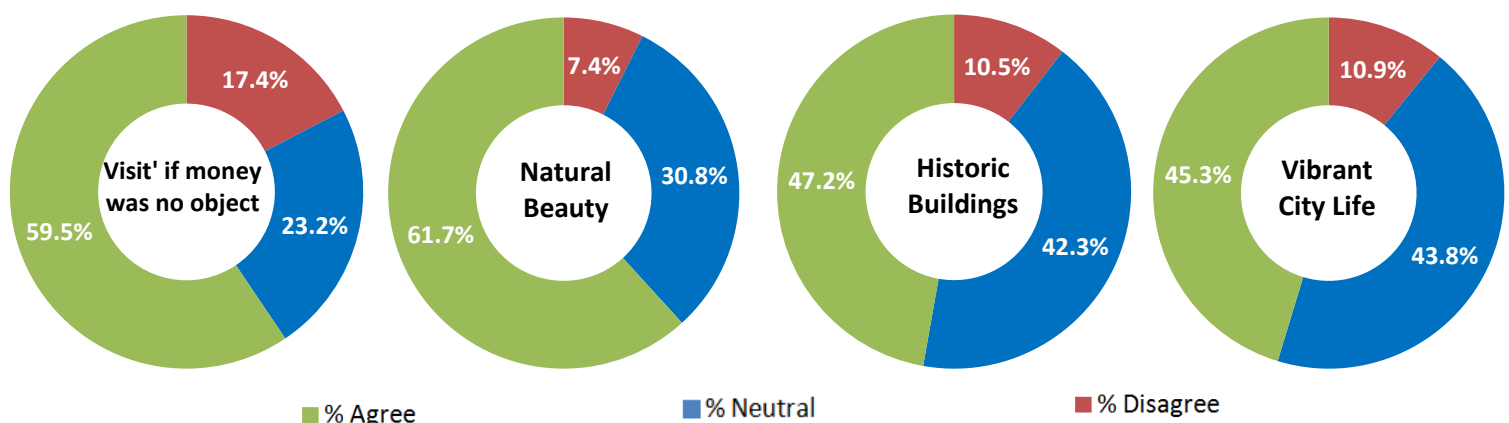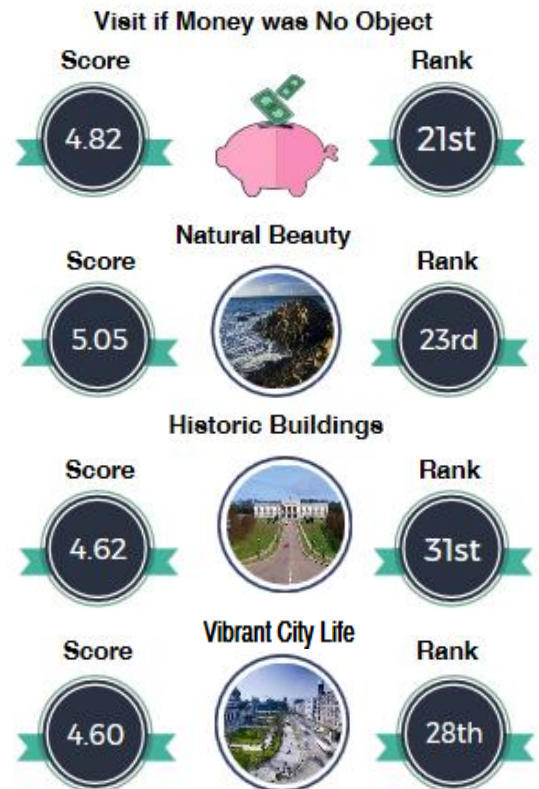

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[2] For each attribute statement, respondents reported to what extent they agreed or disagreed on a seven point Likert scale, where 1 is strongly disagree, 4 is neither agree nor disagree, and 7 is strongly agree. Respondents who provided a scores between 1 and 3 were categorised as disagreeing with the statement, scores between 5 and 7 were categorised as agreeing, while scores of 4 were categorised as neutral. For the 'Visit if Money was no Object' attribute, appropriate alternative anchor words were used – please refer to footnote 1.

Attribute scores in relation to previous visits to Northern Ireland

In 2016, 8% of NBI[SM] respondents had previously visited Northern Ireland. Respondents who had previously visited the region scored Northern Ireland significantly higher for the Tourism dimension overall, as well as for each of the individual attributes, than those who had not (Figures 5 and 6).

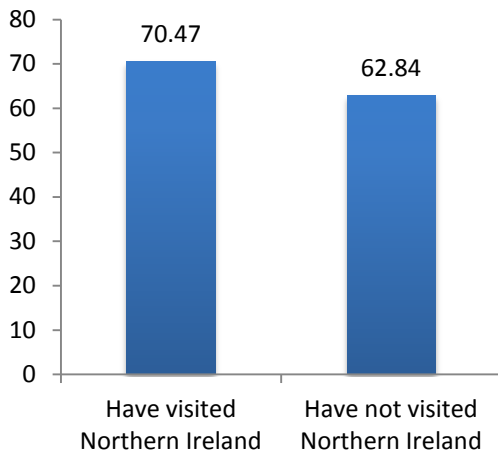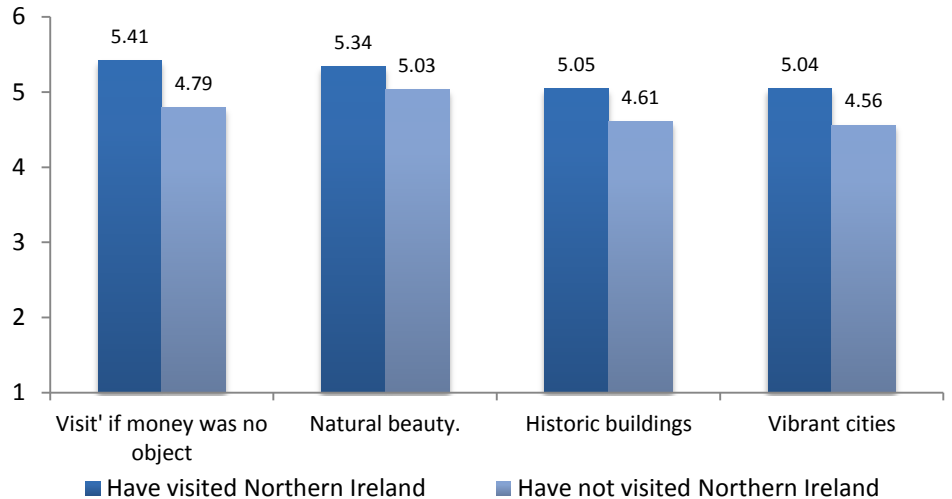**Figure 5: Difference in Tourism dimension scores in relation to previous visitation**

Figure 6: Difference in attribute scores in relation to previous visitation

Words associated with the experience of visiting Northern Ireland

Respondents were asked to select, from a predetermined list, adjectives they felt most accurately described the experience of visiting Northern Ireland[3]. Figure 7 presents a word cloud of the results.

The words most commonly associated with the experience of visiting Northern Ireland include; 'Fascinating' (24% of respondents), 'Exciting' (20%), 'Educational' (17%), 'Relaxing' (16%) and 'Romantic' (12%).

A smaller proportion of respondents associated the words 'Risky' (8%), 'Spiritual' (7%), 'Boring' (7%), 'Stressful' (4%) or 'Depressing' (4%) with the experience of visiting Northern Ireland

Figure 7: Words associated with the experience of visiting Northern Ireland

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[3] Respondents were able to select more than one adjective from the predetermined list for the word association task, as such, results may add up to over 100%