

Six Dimensions of the Nation Brands IndexSM 2021

International Perceptions of Northern Ireland: Tourism

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 29th of 60 for the Tourism dimension (down two places since 2020). Tourism was Northern Ireland's 2nd lowest ranked dimension of the Six Dimensions, as has also been the case in all previous survey years.
- Northern Ireland's score for Tourism increased to 66.52 (+2.41 since 2020) – the highest ever score received for this dimension.
- As in all previous survey years, Tourism was Northern Ireland's highest scoring dimension but its relatively low rank suggests that other nations were also scored highly, thus making the Tourism dimension more competitive and resulting in a lower than expected ranking for Northern Ireland.
- Tourism received significantly higher scores from those who had visited Northern Ireland compared with 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) 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 **Tourism**. The score for the Tourism dimension is calculated using scores from four 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 "visit if money was no object" statement was presented slightly differently.

Attribute	Statement
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	'This country has a vibrant city life and urban attractions.'

The score for the Tourism 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 Tourism dimension increased to 66.52 in 2021 (+2.41 since 2020). Its rank decreased two places to 29th.

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



Tourism remained Northern Ireland's 2nd lowest ranking dimension in 2021. However, Tourism was Northern Ireland's highest scoring dimension. This was also the case in all previous survey years.

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

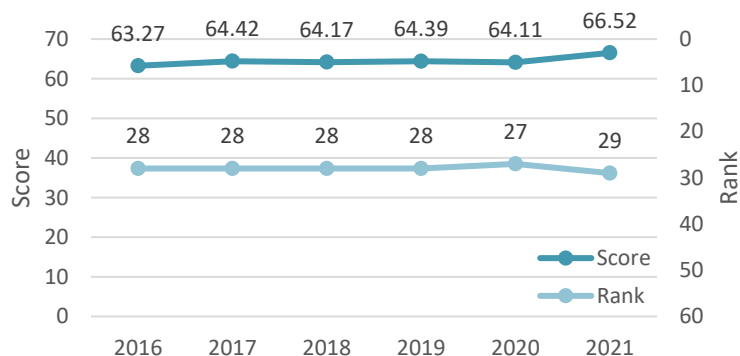


Figure 2 shows Northern Ireland's score and rank change over time for the Tourism dimension.

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.

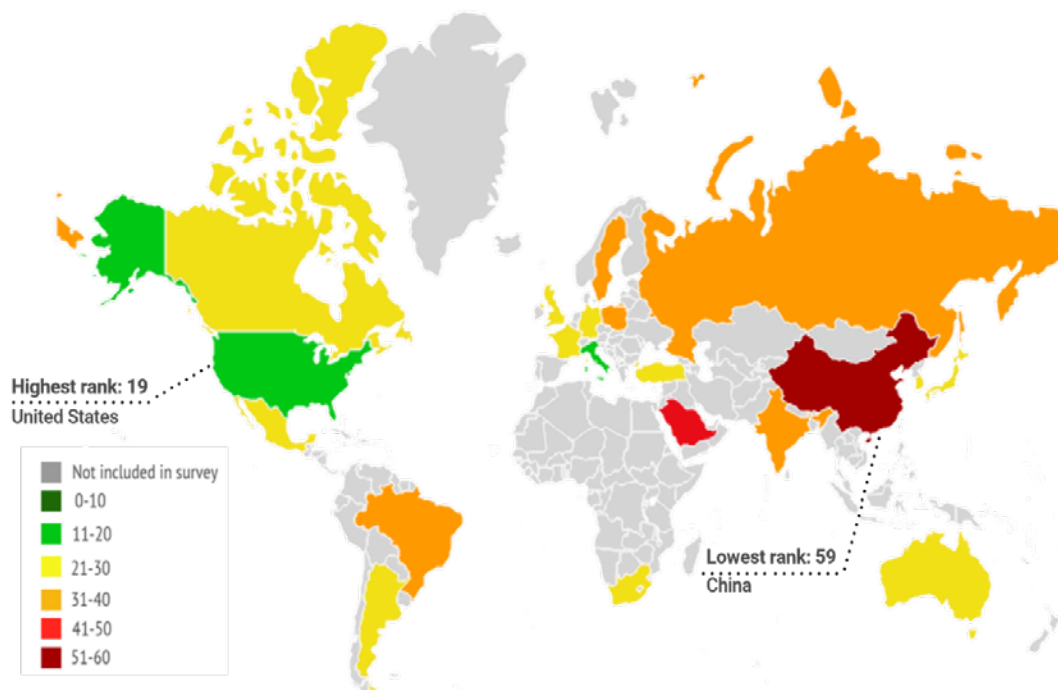
Rankings and scores on the Tourism dimension from around the world

Northern Ireland's Tourism was ranked relatively highly globally compared to previous years (Figure 3). In 2021, 12 out of 20 panel nations awarded Tourism with a top half ranking (30th or higher), an improvement on all previous years.

The highest rankings were received from the United States (19th), Italy (20th) and Australia (22nd). Northern Ireland's lowest rankings were received from China (59th), Saudi Arabia (44th) and Turkey (39th). Along with the Immigration and Investment dimension, the ranking from China (59th) was the lowest ranking ever received from any panel country for any dimension.

The largest change in rank was from China, who ranked Northern Ireland 43 places lower than in 2020. However, compared to 2020, three countries (Brazil, Mexico and Italy), ranked Northern Ireland higher.

Figure 3: Northern Ireland's rankings on the Tourism dimension from around the world



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 being 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's highest score was received from India (78.16), followed by Mexico (73.61). Northern Ireland also received high scores from South Africa (70.89) and Argentina (70.08). Northern Ireland's lowest scores were received from Japan (55.22) and South Korea (60.42).

Northern Ireland’s relatively high rank (29th) and low score (60.42) from South Korea contrasts with the relatively low rank (37th) and high score (78.16) 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.

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 Tourism dimension have been positive (i.e. above the neutral value of 4) each year since Northern Ireland was included in the survey in 2016. The highest scoring Tourism attribute in 2021 was “natural beauty” (5.27). As in previous years, this was the highest scoring attribute in any dimension.

When attribute ranks were compared with the other participating nations, Northern Ireland was ranked relatively highly in relation to “natural beauty” and participants’ willingness to “visit [Northern Ireland] if money was no object” (23rd out of the 60 nations). Lower rankings were received for “vibrant city” (32nd) and “historic buildings” (34th) (Figure 4). As in previous years, these two attributes were amongst the four lowest ranking in any dimension.

Figure 4: Rankings and scores for Northern Ireland’s Tourism attributes



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

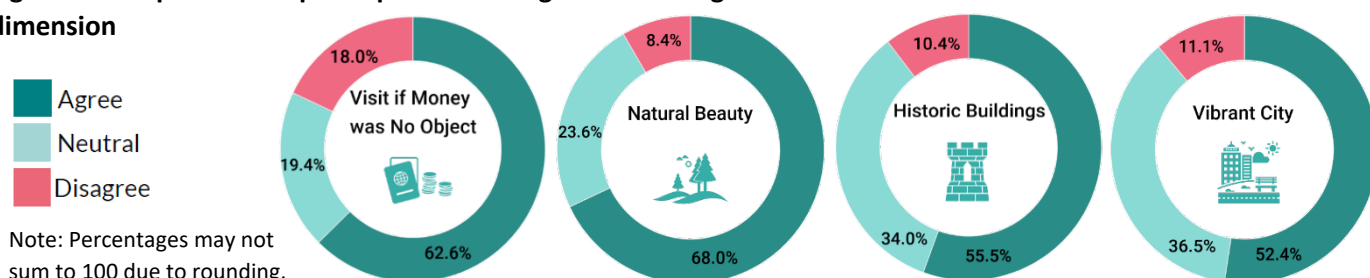
Proportion of participants who agreed or disagreed with each Tourism attribute statement

It is also useful to consider the proportion of participants who either agreed or disagreed with each attribute statement¹ (see Figure 5). The proportions reported below for the attributes within the Tourism dimension were all similar to those observed in previous survey years. However, in all four attributes, the proportion of participants providing neutral responses decreased and the agreement rate increased.

Over two in three participants agreed that Northern Ireland is rich in natural beauty (68 per cent); the highest rate observed across all 23 attributes. Similarly, 63 per cent indicated they would be willing to visit if money was no object. Over half of participants also agreed that Northern Ireland was rich in historic buildings (56 per cent) and had a vibrant city life (52 per cent).

The “visit if money was no object” and “natural beauty” attributes had the lowest neutral rates of all 23 attributes (19 per cent and 24 per cent respectively). Meanwhile, a relatively large proportion indicated they would not be willing to visit Northern Ireland if money was no object (18 per cent).

Figure 5: Proportion of participants who agreed or disagreed with each attribute statement in the Tourism dimension

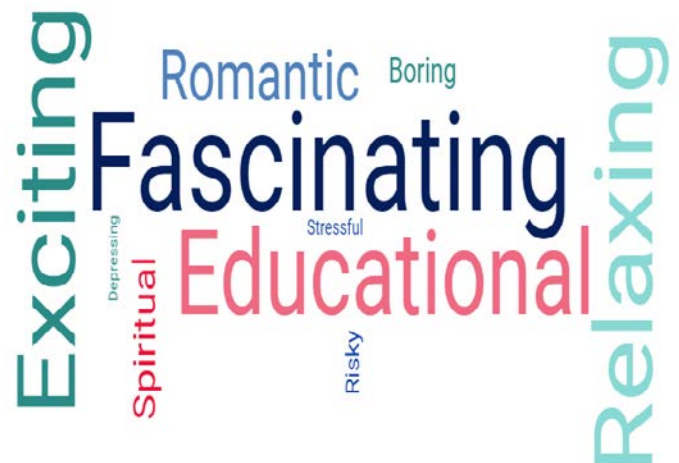


¹ For each attribute statement, survey participants reported to what extent they agreed or disagreed on a seven point Likert scale. These are converted to scores, where one to three were categorised as ‘disagree’, four as ‘neutral’, and five to seven as ‘agree’.

Words associated with the experience of visiting Northern Ireland

Participants were asked to select, from a predetermined list, the adjectives they felt would most accurately describe the experience of visiting Northern Ireland (participants could choose more than one response). The most common response in 2021 was 'Fascinating' (28 per cent of participants), the first year 'none of these' (20 per cent of participants) was not the most common response. Figure 6 presents adjectives chosen by remaining participants. After 'Fascinating' the words most commonly associated with the experience of visiting Northern Ireland was 'Exciting' (24 per cent), and 'Educational' & 'Relaxing' (both 23 per cent). Apart from the most common answer changing from 'none of these' for the first year, these proportions were all similar to those observed in 2020.

Figure 6: Words associated with the experience of visiting Northern Ireland

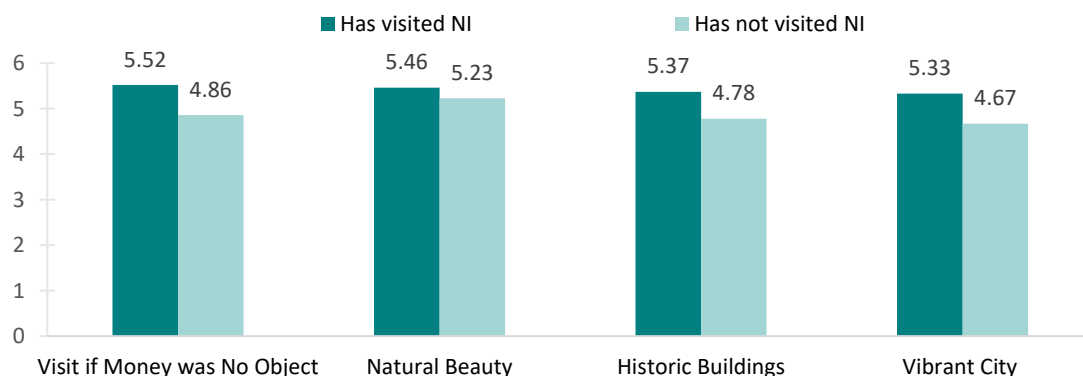


Visitors to Northern Ireland

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 significantly² higher on the Tourism dimension (73.95) than those who had not visited (65.13). This was also the case for each of the composite attributes (Figure 7). This pattern was also evident in all previous survey years.

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.

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.