

Six Dimensions of the Nation Brands IndexSM 2021

International Perceptions of Northern Ireland: Governance

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 21st of 60 countries for the Governance dimension, one rank lower than all the previous survey years. Governance was Northern Ireland's highest ranked dimension, as was also the case in the previous years.
- Northern Ireland's score for Governance increased to 60.70 in 2021 (+1.12 since 2020) – Northern Ireland's highest ever score on this dimension. As in all previous years, Governance was Northern Ireland's 3rd highest scoring dimension in 2021.
- Governance received significantly higher scores from those who had visited Northern Ireland than those who had not.
- Northern Ireland received its highest ranks for the five Governance attributes out of all of the 23 attributes.

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 **Governance**. The score for the Governance dimension is calculated using scores from five 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.

Attribute	Statement
Competent & Honest	'This country is competently and honestly governed.'
Rights & Fairness	'This country respects the rights of its citizens and treats them with fairness.'
Peace & Security	'This country behaves responsibly in the areas of international peace and security.'
Environment	'This country behaves responsibly to protect the environment.'
Poverty	'This country behaves responsibly to help reduce world poverty.'

The score for the Governance 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 for Governance (60.70) was higher in 2021 than in 2020. At 21st, the rank was one place lower than 2020 and all previous years when it was ranked 20th.

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



Overall, Governance was Northern Ireland's 3rd highest scoring dimension and highest ranking dimension in 2021, as was the case in the previous years.

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



Note: A lower rank and higher score is better

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

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

Rankings and scores on the Governance dimension from around the world

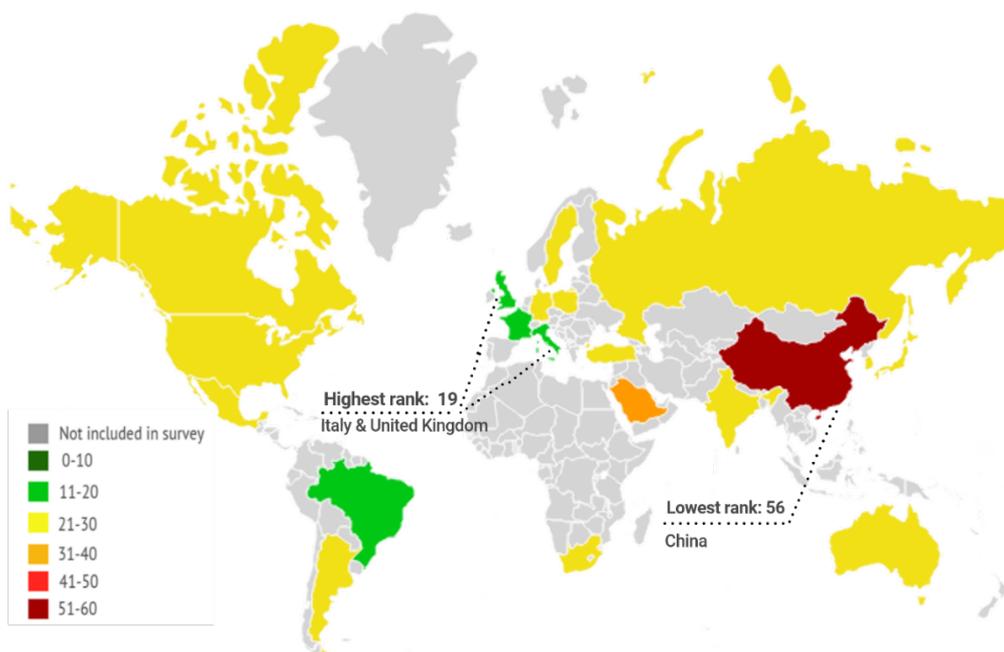
Northern Ireland's Governance was ranked relatively highly globally, with all but two of the 20 panel nations providing a top half ranking (30th or above), (Figure 3). In previous years, Governance has consistently received top half rankings from 18 of 20 panel countries.

In 2021, the highest rankings for Governance in Northern Ireland were received from Italy and the United Kingdom (both 19th), Brazil and France (both 20th). Northern Ireland's lowest rankings were received from China (56th) and Saudi Arabia (34th).

The largest change in rank for Governance was from China, who ranked Northern Ireland 45 places lower than in 2020. Northern Ireland was ranked lower than 2020 in the Governance dimension by all panel countries, except Brazil who ranked Northern Ireland one place higher than 2020 and Turkey, whose ranking didn't change.

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 were 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.

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



The highest score was received from India (75.91) as was also the case in all previous survey years. Northern Ireland also received high scores from China (64.43), Saudi Arabia (63.93) and Mexico (63.78) in 2021. Northern Ireland's lowest scores were received from Japan (53.08), Sweden (54.85) and Germany (57.61).

Northern Ireland's relatively high rank (21st) and low score (54.85) from Sweden, contrasts with the low rank (56th) and relatively high score (64.43) from China.

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 Governance dimension have been positive (i.e. above the neutral value of 4) each year since Northern Ireland was included in 2016. The highest scoring Governance attribute in 2021, as in all previous years, was "rights and fairness" (4.79).

Out of 60 nations examined, Northern Ireland was ranked between 20th and 22nd for all five Governance attributes (Figure 4). The Governance attributes, particularly "environment", have consistently been amongst the highest ranking in any dimension. Although Northern Ireland ranked lower than 2020 in all five Governance attributes, they all received a higher score, which could be considered to provide a more absolute understanding of this dimension.

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



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

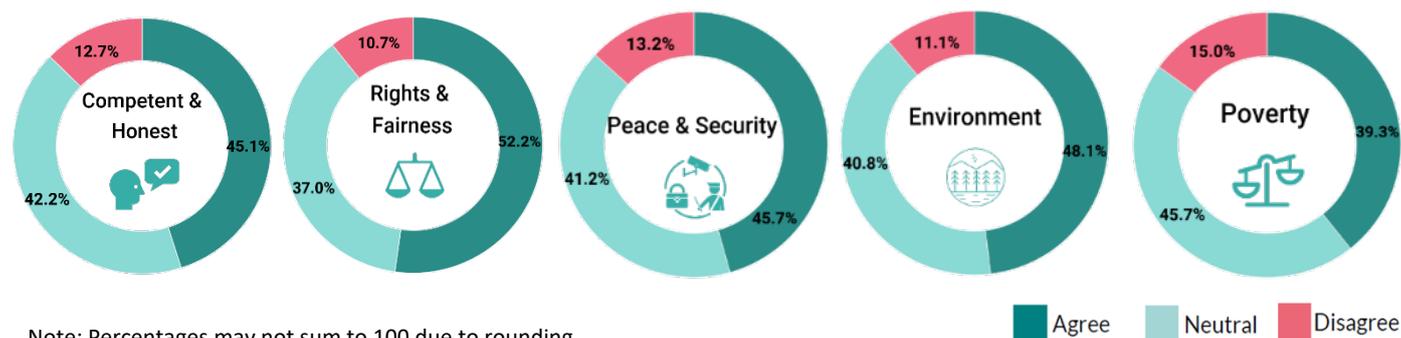
Proportion of participants who agreed or disagreed with each Governance attribute statement

It is also useful to consider the proportion of participants who either agreed or disagreed with each attribute statement¹ (see Figure 5). Generally, the proportions in 2021 are similar to those in other years. However, agreement rates for all attributes have increased from 2020.

Just over half of participants (52 per cent) agreed that Northern Ireland respects the rights of its citizens and treats them with fairness; the highest proportion for attributes within this dimension. This was followed by "environment" (48 per cent), "peace and security" (46 per cent), "competent and honest" (45 per cent) and "poverty" (39 per cent). Each attribute statement shows an increase in agreement rate compared with 2020.

Attributes in the Governance dimension received a large proportion of neutral responses which could suggest a lack of awareness or strong views on Northern Ireland's Governance. However, these proportions have decreased over time in the last year. The statement with which the highest proportion of participants who disagreed across all 23 attributes was that Northern Ireland behaves responsibly to help reduce world poverty (15 per cent).

Figure 5: Proportion of participants who agreed or disagreed with each attribute statement in the Governance 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'.

Words associated with the government of Northern Ireland

Participants were asked to select, from a predetermined list, the adjectives they thought most accurately described the government of Northern Ireland (participants could choose more than one response). The most common response in 2021 was 'Reliable' (24 per cent of participants), the first year 'none of these' (23 per cent) was not the most common response. Figure 6 presents adjectives chosen by remaining participants. After 'Reliable' the words most commonly associated with Northern Ireland's government were 'Trustworthy' (20 per cent) and 'Reassuring' (19 per cent). These proportions were similar to those observed in 2020.

Figure 6: Words associated with the government of Northern Ireland

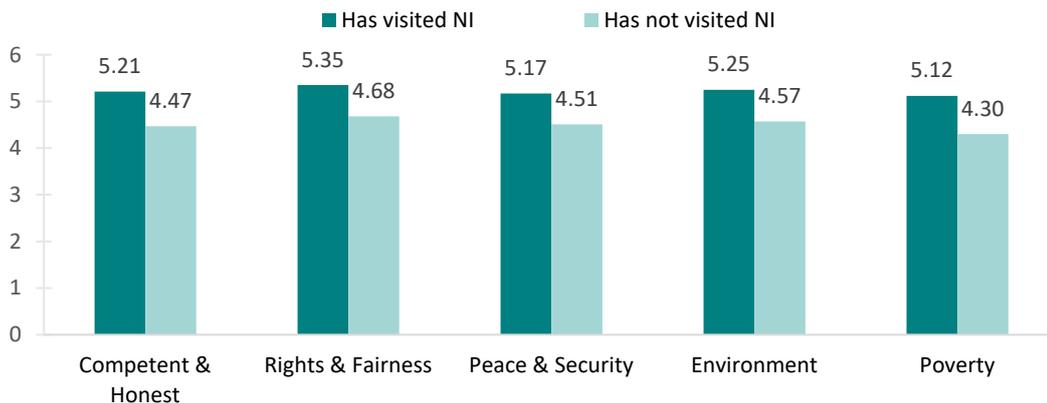


Visitors to Northern Ireland

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 Governance dimension (70.63) than those who had not visited (58.84). This was also the case for each of the composite attributes (Figure 7). This pattern was evident in all previous 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.