

Six Dimensions of the Nation Brands IndexSM 2021

International Perceptions of Northern Ireland: Culture

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 33rd out of 60 for the Culture dimension (down 2 places since 2020). Culture was Northern Ireland's lowest ranked dimension, as was also the case in all previous survey years.
- In 2021, seven countries gave Northern Ireland a higher rank for Culture than last year. The largest positive change was from United States, who ranked Northern Ireland 5 places higher.
- Northern Ireland's score for Culture increased to 59.54 in 2021 (+2.76 since 2020), making this Northern Ireland's highest ever score on this dimension.
- Culture was Northern Ireland's 3rd lowest scoring dimension in 2021. However, 17 of 19 panel nations¹ scored Culture higher compared with 2020.
- Culture received significantly higher scores from those who had visited Northern Ireland than those who hadn't.

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 **Culture**. The score for the Culture 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.

Attribute	Statement
Sports	'This country excels at sport.'
Cultural Heritage	'This country has a rich cultural heritage.'
Contemporary Culture	'This country is an interesting and exciting place for contemporary culture such as music, films, art and literature.'

The score for the Culture 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 ranking on the Culture dimension decreased two places since 2020. However, Northern Ireland's score on the Culture dimension (59.54) was higher in 2021 than in 2020.

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



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

Overall, Culture was Northern Ireland’s lowest ranking dimension in 2021, as was also the case in all previous survey years. Culture was also Northern Ireland’s third lowest scoring dimension in 2021.

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

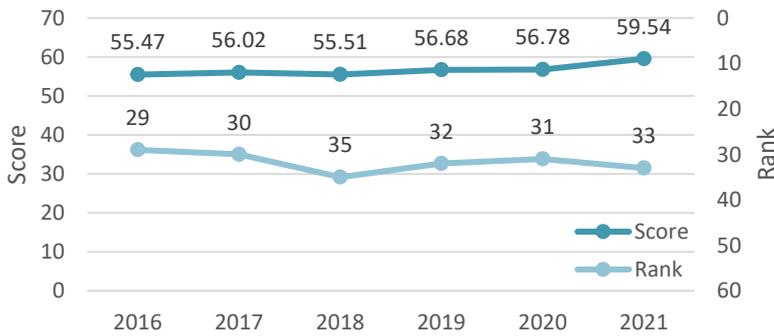


Figure 2 shows Northern Ireland’s score and rank change over time for the Culture dimension.

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 higher score is better

Rankings and scores on the Culture dimension from around the world

Northern Ireland received lower rankings from panel nations on the Culture dimension compared with the other five dimensions of the NBI in 2021 (Figure 3). Less than half of the panel countries (eight out of 20) gave Northern Ireland a top half ranking (30th or above) for Culture. As in all previous survey years, this is fewer top half rankings than the other dimensions received. However, it is double the amount compared with 2020.

In 2021, Northern Ireland’s highest Culture rankings were received from Italy (22nd of 60) and Australia (24th out of 60). Northern Ireland’s lowest rankings were received from China (50th), Brazil and Saudi Arabia (both 42nd).

Seven countries gave Northern Ireland a higher rank for Culture than last year. The largest positive change in rank was from United States, who ranked Northern Ireland five places higher. China had the largest negative change, ranking Northern Ireland 33 places lower than in 2020.

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 scores were received from India (74.87), China (65.37), Saudi Arabia (63.67) and Australia (63.13). Northern Ireland’s lowest scores were received from Japan (52.08), Sweden (53.15), Germany (55.02) and South Korea (55.33). With the exception of China and the United Kingdom, 17 out of 19 panel countries scored Northern Ireland higher than 2020 on the Culture dimension.

Figure 3: Northern Ireland’s rankings on the Culture dimension from around the world

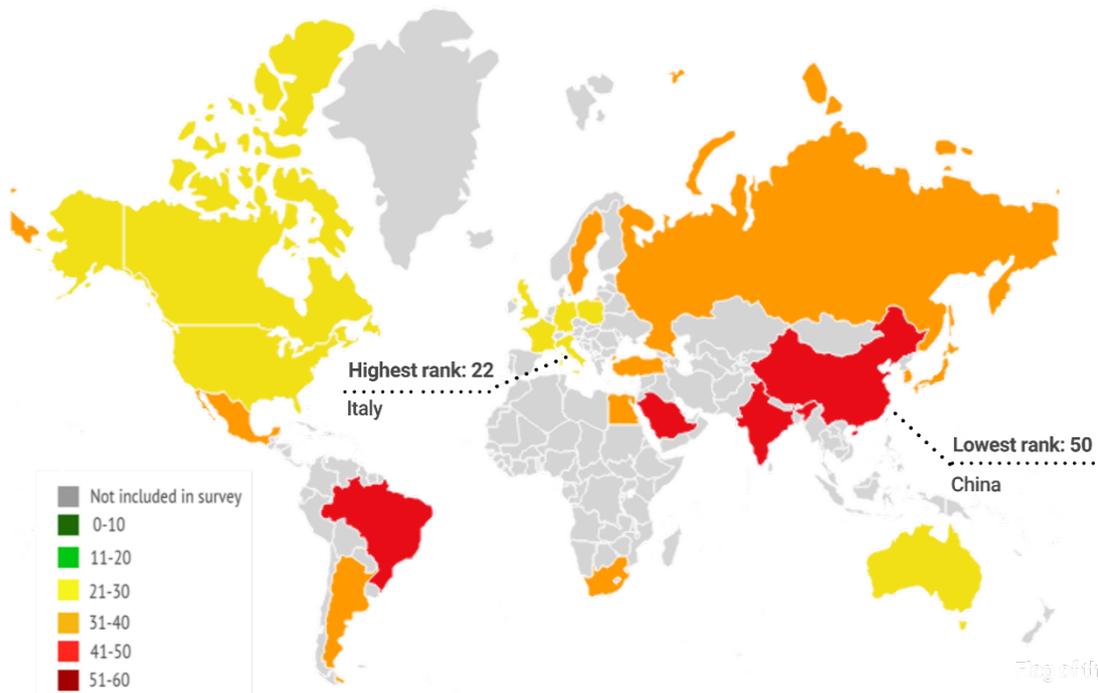


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Northern Ireland received a low rank (50th) but high score (65.37) from China. This contrasts with the high rank (22nd) but low score (55.95) from Italy. This suggests that scores from different panel countries are not necessarily comparable, again, 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.

In 2021, the "sports" attribute received its third positive score (i.e. above the neutral value of 4) since Northern Ireland was included in 2016. Nonetheless, it remained Northern Ireland's lowest scoring culture attribute (4.18) and was the second lowest scoring attribute across all dimensions. However, this is 0.14 increase from 2020. The highest scoring Culture attribute in 2021 was "cultural heritage" (4.91), which was the fourth highest scoring attribute out of all of the dimensions.

As in previous years, all three Culture attributes were among the lowest ranking attributes in any dimension (35th, 32nd and 30th) (see Figure 4 below).

Figure 4: Rankings and scores for Northern Ireland's Culture 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 Culture attribute statement

It is also useful to consider the proportion of participants who either agreed or disagreed with each attribute statement² (see Figure 5). The proportions reported in 2021 for the attributes within the Culture dimension are all similar to those observed in previous survey years. However, agreement rates are at the highest they have ever been since 2016.

A relatively large proportion disagreed that Northern Ireland excels at sport (22 per cent) and the agreement rate for this statement was low compared with other attribute statements (33 per cent), however the agreement rate did increase 6 percentage points from 2020. Under half of participants (45 per cent) gave a neutral response.

Almost three fifths of people agreed that Northern Ireland has a rich cultural heritage (58 per cent), while 45 per cent agreed that Northern Ireland is an interesting and exciting place for contemporary culture. A relatively large proportion of participants gave a neutral response in relation to both of these attributes (32 per cent and 41 per cent respectively). However, the proportion of neutral responses decreased from 2020 in both of these attributes while the proportion of those agreeing increased. Disagreement rates also decreased since 2020 for both attributes (10 per cent and 14 per cent respectively).

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



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'.

Cultural activities or products associated with Northern Ireland

Participants were asked to select, from a predetermined list, the cultural activities or products they would most associate with Northern Ireland (participants could choose more than one response). The most common response was 'none of these' (32 per cent of participants). Figure 6 presents adjectives chosen by remaining participants. The activities and products most commonly associated with Northern Ireland were 'Music' (25 per cent), 'Museums' (24 per cent), and 'Sports' (19 per cent). These proportions all increased since 2020 and the response 'none of these', decreased.

Figure 6: Cultural activities or products associated with Northern Ireland

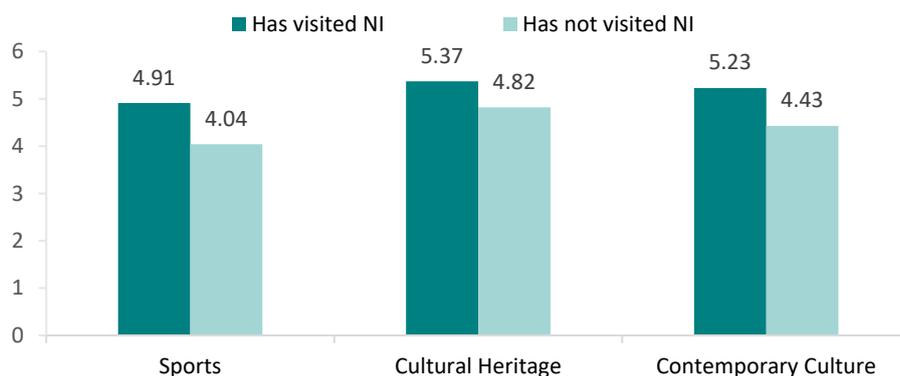


Visitors to Northern Ireland

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 Culture dimension (69.82) than those who had not visited (57.62). 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.

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.