

Six Dimensions of the Nation Brands IndexSM 2021

International Perceptions of Northern Ireland: People

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 23rd of 60 for the People dimension, which is down one place from 2020.
- People was Northern Ireland's 2nd highest scoring dimension and 3rd highest ranking in 2021 – this continues the trend of strong performance in score and rank observed since 2016.
- Northern Ireland's score for People increased to 65.42 in 2021 (+2.13 since 2020), making this the highest score ever for this dimension.
- Compared with 2020, 14 of 19 panel countries gave Northern Ireland higher scores for People, while six countries ranked Northern Ireland higher.¹
- People received significantly higher scores from those who had visited Northern Ireland compared to 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 **People**. The score for the People 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, "employability" was presented slightly differently, with respondents asked to rate their 'willingness' on a seven point scale.

| Attribute | Statement |
|----------------|--|
| Welcoming | 'If I visited this country, the people would make me feel very welcome.' |
| Close Friend | 'I would like to have a person from this country as a close friend.' |
| Employability* | 'Imagine you are a manager needing to fill an important position in your organisation. How willing would you be to consider a well-qualified person from the following countries?' |

The score for the People 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 People (65.42) was higher in 2021 than in 2020. Its rank (23rd) dropped one place from 2020.

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



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

People was Northern Ireland's 3rd highest ranking and 2nd highest scoring dimension in 2021, as was the case in the previous years.

Figure 2: Northern Ireland's score and rank on the People dimension (2016-2020)



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

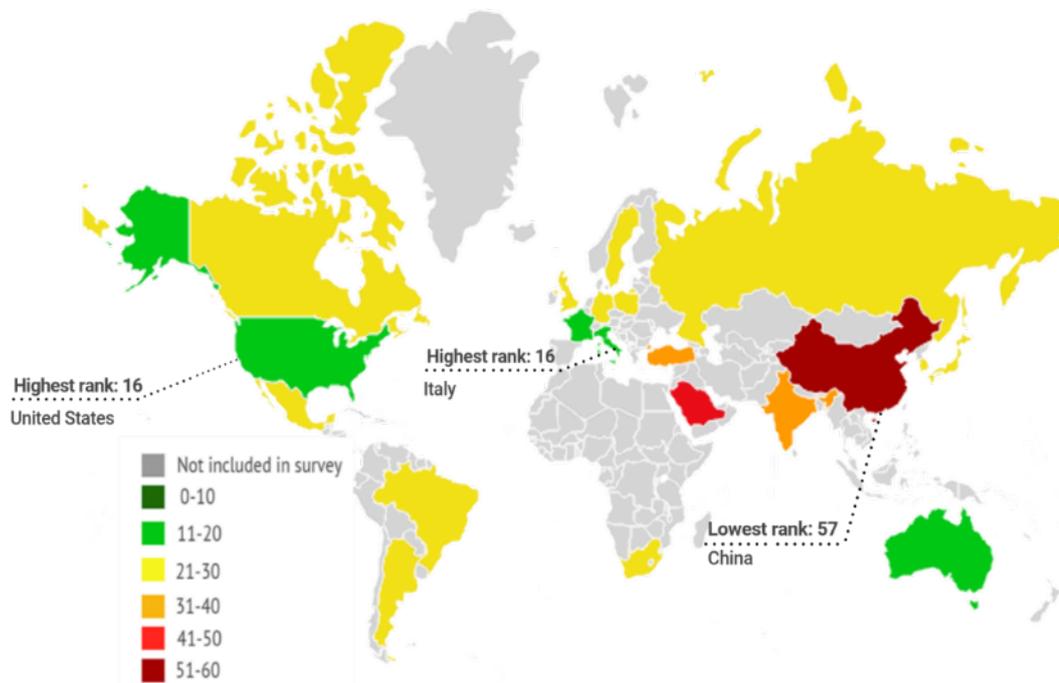
The time series highlights that although Northern Ireland received their lowest rank in 2021, they also received their highest ever score on this dimension in 2021. This reflects the importance of considering both score and rank.

Rankings and scores on the People dimension from around the world

Northern Ireland's People dimension received reasonable ranks globally (Figure 3). Northern Ireland received top half rankings (30th or higher) from 16 of the 20 panel nations. This is an increase from 11 nations in 2020.

The highest rankings were received from Italy and the United States (16th) and Australia and France (20th). The rankings from Italy and the United States (16th) were the highest received from any panel country for any dimension. Northern Ireland's lowest rankings were received from China (57th), Saudi Arabia (44th) and Turkey (39th). Northern Ireland received the widest range of rankings globally on the People dimension compared with the other five dimensions of the NBI. The largest negative change in rank was from China, who ranked Northern Ireland 44 places lower. Meanwhile, the largest positive change came from South Africa, who ranked Northern Ireland seven places higher than in 2020.

Figure 3: Northern Ireland's rankings on the People 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 scored higher in 14 out of 19 panel nations for the People dimension compared with 2020. Northern Ireland's highest scores were received from India (77.09), Mexico (73.32) and South Africa (70.57).

Relatively high scores were also received from Australia (68.00), the United Kingdom (67.53), and the United States (67.35) in 2021. Northern Ireland's lowest scores were received from Japan (54.51) and South Korea (54.63).

Northern Ireland received a relatively high rank (24th) and low score (54.51) from Japan, which contrasts with the low rank (37th) and high score (77.09) received 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 People dimension have been positive (i.e. above the neutral value of 4) each year since Northern Ireland was included in 2016. The highest scoring People attribute in 2021, as in previous survey years, was "employability" (5.08). As in previous years, this was one of the highest scoring attributes in any dimension.

When attribute scores were compared with the other participating nations, Northern Ireland was ranked relatively highly (23rd or 24th out of the 60 nations examined) for all three attributes. Although all three attributes increased in score from 2020, they also all moved down two ranks.

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



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

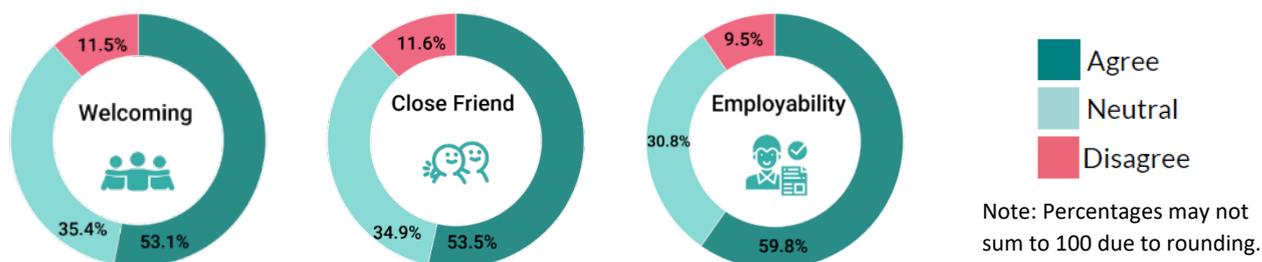
Proportion of participants who agreed or disagreed with each People attribute statement

It is also useful to consider the proportion of participants who either agreed or disagreed with each attribute statement² (see Figure 5). The proportions in 2021 were all similar to those observed in 2020. However, the agreement rate for all three attributes have increased.

Three in five of participants (60 per cent) said that they would be willing to employ a person from Northern Ireland. Over half of participants agreed that they would like to have a person from Northern Ireland as a close friend (54 per cent) and that the people of Northern Ireland would be welcoming if they visited (53 per cent).

A large proportion of participants provided a neutral response to each of the People attributes (ranging from 31 per cent to 35 per cent), which could suggest a lack of awareness or strong views on the reputation of the People of Northern Ireland. However, the proportion of participants providing neutral responses decreased from 2020 for all three attributes.

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

Words associated with the people of Northern Ireland

Participants were asked to select, from a predetermined list, the adjectives they thought most accurately described the people of Northern Ireland (participants could choose more than one response). The most common response in 2021 was 'Hard working' (30 per cent of participants), the first year 'none of these' (25 per cent of participants) was not the most common response. Figure 6 presents adjectives chosen by remaining participants. After 'Hard working', the words most commonly associated with Northern Ireland's people were 'Honest' (24 per cent) and 'Skilful' (21 per cent).

Apart from the most common answer changing from 'none of these' for the first year, these proportions are similar to those observed in 2020.

Figure 6: Words associated with the people of Northern Ireland

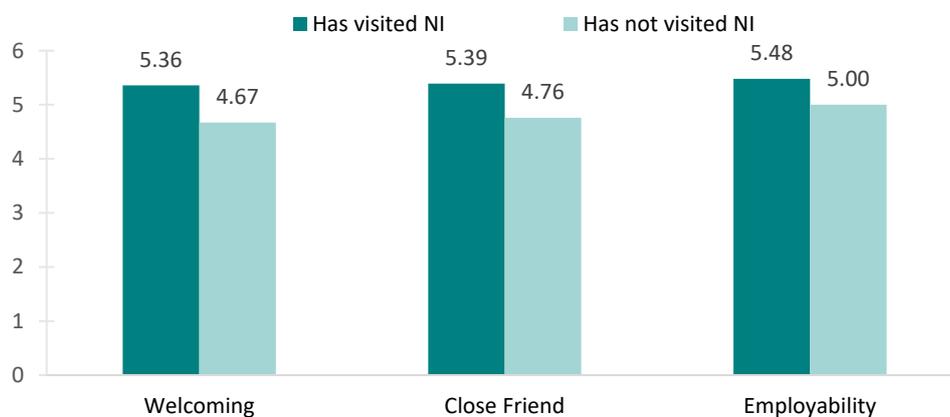


Visitors to Northern Ireland

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 significantly³ higher on the People dimension (73.76) than those who had not visited (63.87). 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.