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NISRA
Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency

# Six Dimensions of the Nation Brands Index℠ 2022

**International Perceptions of Northern Ireland: Exports**

**4 May 2023**

This bulletin is part of a series of six. The others are available on the TEO website.

## Key findings

- In 2022, Northern Ireland ranked 26th of 60 for the Exports dimension (up one place since 2021). Exports was Northern Ireland's third lowest ranked dimension.
- Northern Ireland scored 55.97 for Exports in 2022 (-0.45 since 2021). The Exports dimension remains Northern Ireland's lowest scoring dimension.
- When asked to what extent participants agreed or disagreed with attribute statements, "science and technology" received the lowest agreement rate (31 per cent). This was the lowest agreement rate across all 23 attributes.
- Exports received significantly higher scores from those who had visited Northern Ireland than those who had not. Exports was the dimension which had the largest difference between these scores (14.41).

## Introduction

In order to assess and monitor its international reputation, Northern Ireland has been included on the Nation Brands Index℠ (NBI℠) 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 **Exports**. The score for the Exports 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, the "buy products" statement was presented slightly differently.

| Attribute | Statement |
|---|---|
| **Science & Technology** | 'This country makes a major contribution to innovation in science and technology.' |
| **Buy Products** | 'Imagine you are about to buy a product when you notice that it is made in Northern Ireland. Please indicate whether you think this would make you feel less good/the same/better about buying it:' |
| **Creative Place** | 'This country is a creative place with cutting-edge ideas and new ways of thinking.' |

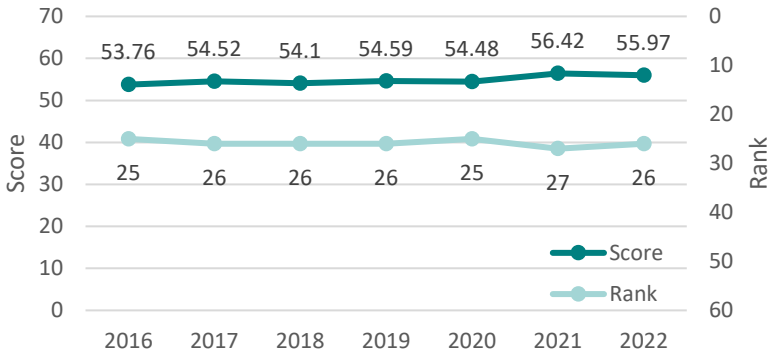
The score for the Exports dimension is out of 100, while the score for each of the attributes is based on a scale from one to seven (with seven being the highest and best, and one being the lowest and worst). Sixty countries are included in the NBI; rankings presented in the report show Northern Ireland's position among these 60 countries.

Northern Ireland's score on the Exports dimension (55.97) was lower in 2022 than in 2021. However, its rank increased by one place (26th).

**Figure 1: Northern Ireland's ranking and score on the Exports dimension of the NBI (2021-2022)**

Overall, the Exports dimension received its second highest ever score in 2022 but it continues to be the lowest scoring dimension each year since Northern Ireland was included. Exports was Northern Ireland's third lowest ranking dimension in 2022.

**Figure 2: Northern Ireland's score and rank on the Exports dimension (2016-2022)**




Note: A lower rank and a higher score is better

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

The time series highlights that while in 2022 Northern Ireland's score for this dimension was lower than in 2021, its rank was higher. This reflects the importance of considering both score and rank.

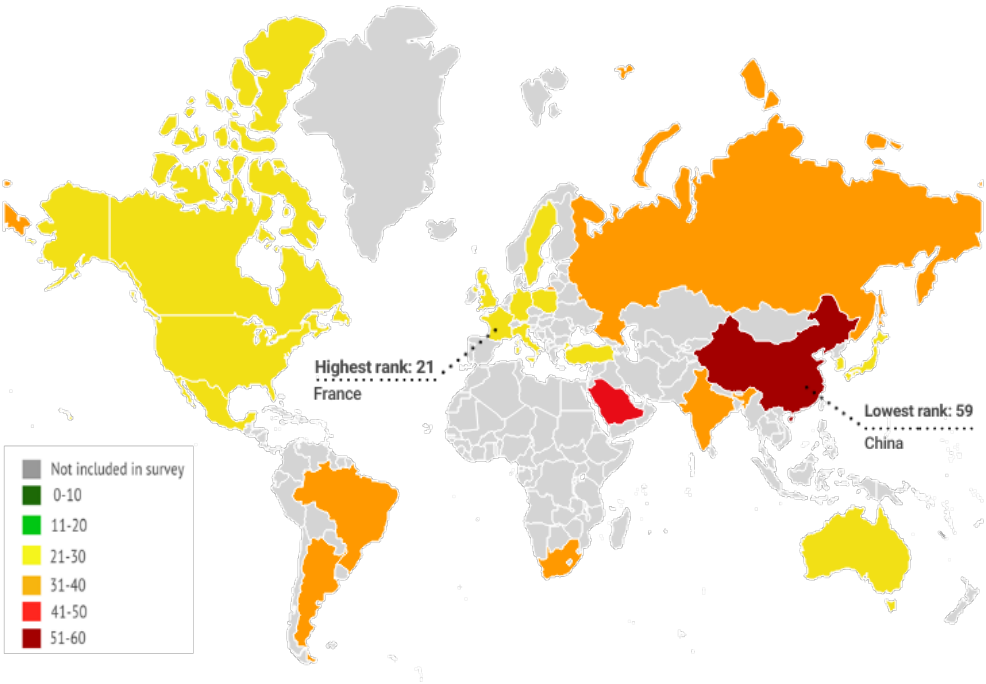
## Rankings and scores on the Exports dimension from around the world

Northern Ireland's Exports dimension received reasonable ranks globally (Figure 3). Northern Ireland received top half rankings (30th or higher) from 13 of the 20 panel nations. This is a decrease from 14 panel nations in 2021, which was a series high.

The highest rankings were received from France (21st), Germany, Italy and the United States (all 24th). Northern Ireland's lowest rankings were received from China (59th), Saudi Arabia (49th) and India (40th). The Export ranking from China (59th), along with the Immigration and Investment ranking for China (59th), was the lowest rank received from any panel nation across all six dimensions.

The largest changes in rank for Exports were from Saudi Arabia, who ranked Northern Ireland eight places lower in 2022 than in 2021 and South Africa, who ranked Northern Ireland five places lower. France, South Korea and Turkey all ranked Northern Ireland two places higher in 2022 than in 2021. This was the largest positive change in rank for Exports.

**Figure 3: Northern Ireland's rankings on the Exports 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. 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 China (64.77), India (64.23) and Saudi Arabia (61.88). Northern Ireland's lowest scores were received from Japan (49.21), Sweden (50.96), and Russia (51.66).

Northern Ireland received its lowest rank (59th) but highest score (64.77) from China. This contrasts with the relatively high rank (27th) but low score (49.21) received from Japan. 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 Exports dimension have been positive (i.e. above the neutral value of 4) each year since Northern Ireland was included in 2016. The highest scoring Exports attribute in 2022 was "buy products" (4.42) for the fourth year in a row. The "science and technology" attribute is consistently the lowest scoring and lowest ranking in the Exports dimension. In 2022, as in previous years, it had one of the lowest scores in any dimension (4.16).

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

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

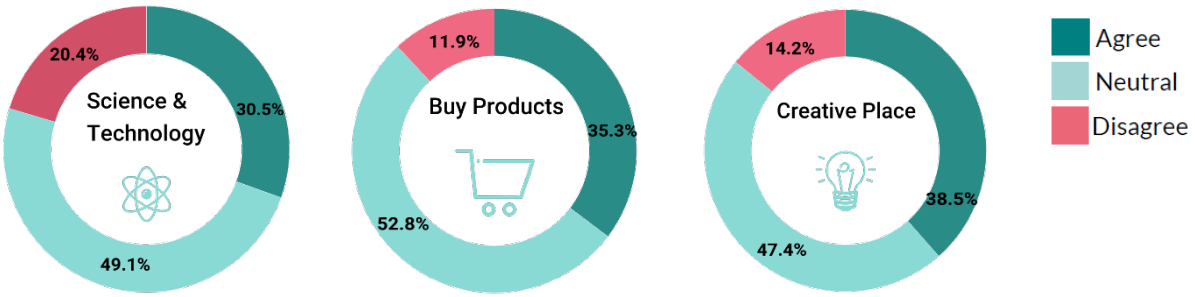
## Proportion of participants who agreed or disagreed with each Exports attribute statement

It is also useful to consider the proportion of participants who either agreed or disagreed with each attribute statement[1] (Figure 5).

The proportions for the attributes within the Exports dimension are all similar to those observed in previous years. However, the agreement rate for all three attributes decreased in 2022 compared with 2021. Almost two fifths of participants agreed that Northern Ireland is a creative place (39 per cent) and over a third indicated that they would feel better about buying a product knowing that it was made in Northern Ireland (35 per cent). Across all 23 attributes, the lowest agreement rate was with the statement that Northern Ireland makes a major contribution to innovation in science and technology (31 per cent).

The Exports dimension has some of the highest proportions of neutral responses across the six dimensions, with "buy products" having the highest of all 23 attributes (53 per cent). The proportions of participants providing neutral responses for the attributes within the Exports dimension all increased from 2021. These high proportions could suggest a lack of awareness or strong views regarding Northern Ireland's contribution to innovation in science and technology, the appeal of its products and its creativity.

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

## Products and services associated with Northern Ireland

**Figure 6: Products or services associated with Northern Ireland**

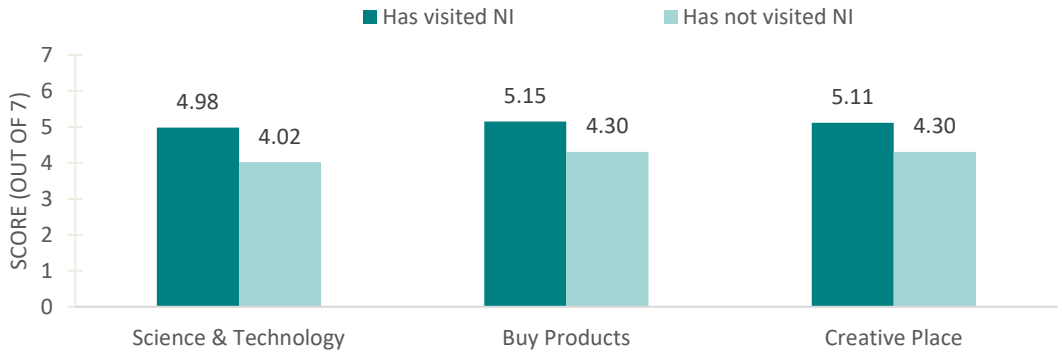
Participants were asked to select, from a predetermined list, the products or services they most associated with Northern Ireland (participants could choose more than one response). The most common response was 'none of these' (37 per cent of participants). Across all Six Dimensions, this was the highest proportion of 'none of these' responses. Figure 6 presents adjectives chosen by remaining participants. The product or service most commonly associated with Northern Ireland was 'Agriculture' (26 per cent), followed by 'Food' (19 per cent) and 'Crafts' (15 per cent).

## Visitors to Northern Ireland

In 2022, 15 per cent of NBI participants reported that they had previously visited Northern Ireland.

Participants who had previously visited Northern Ireland, awarded a score statistically significantly[2] higher on the Exports dimension (68.29) than those who had not visited (53.88). This was also the case for each of the composite attributes (Figure 7). This pattern was also evident in all previous survey years. Exports was the dimension which had the largest difference in score (14.41) between those who had visited Northern Ireland and those who had not visited Northern Ireland.

**Figure 7: Attribute scores (those who have visited Northern Ireland and those who have not)**




The Exports attribute with the largest difference in score, between those who had visited Northern Ireland and those who had not, was "science and technology" (0.96 points). The attribute with the smallest difference was "creative place" (0.81 points).

## Further Information and Feedback

Further information can be found in the overall report (published December 2022) 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: Ian Walsh, analyticalunit@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.