

# The Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index<sup>SM</sup>

2023 Report for Northern Ireland

13 December 2023

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Northern Ireland

## Main points

- Northern Ireland maintained its mid-level ranking at 25th out of 60 nations on the Nation Brands Index<sup>SM</sup> (NBI) 2023. Ranks are based on scores from 20 panel nations, and Northern Ireland achieved an all-time high score of 61.62 out of 100 in 2023.
- Northern Ireland ranked in the top half of nations despite having the second-smallest population of the 60 nations included in the index.
- For the second year running, Northern Ireland's highest rank (22nd) came from the United States (20th in 2022). France and Italy followed, both ranking NI 23rd this year. The lowest rankings came from China (53rd) and India (39th).
- Northern Ireland was ranked 22nd out of 60 nations for perceptions of its Governance, the consistently highest-ranked Dimension for Northern Ireland. The only Dimension to improve its ranking was 'Culture', up two places this year to 32nd from 34th in 2022.
- Familiarity with Northern Ireland reached a new high: 61% of people reported they were at least 'just a little familiar' with Northern Ireland, up from 51% in 2016.
- Northern Ireland scored 4.73 out of 7 for overall 'favourability', achieving its highest score since joining the index in 2016. Northern Ireland ranked 25th out of 60 participating nations for 'favourability'.
- Having personal experience of Northern Ireland is associated with significantly improved ratings on every aspect of reputation. People who reported buying a product from NI, visiting a website about NI, or having visited NI for work or holiday gave higher ratings on average for all 23 'Attributes' of reputation.

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## 2. Introduction

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To assess and monitor its international reputation, Northern Ireland has been included on the [Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index<sup>SM</sup> \(NBI\)](#) each year since 2016. The NBI<sup>SM</sup> is an online survey run by the market research firm [Ipsos](#) that measures and ranks the reputations of 60 nations across Six Dimensions: Exports; Governance; Culture; People; Tourism; and Immigration and Investment. The NBI<sup>SM</sup> is issued to 20 panel nations generating a total sample size for Northern Ireland of around 10,000 respondents in 2023. Analytical Unit in The Executive Office are provided with the data from the NBI<sup>SM</sup> and have produced this report and an accompanying interactive data [dashboard](#).

The NBI provides a snapshot of attitudes and perceptions of Northern Ireland which are useful in helping us to understand more about Northern Ireland's international reputation. Over time, these snapshots can track Northern Ireland's reputation in the longer-term.

### Changes to this publication

After user consultation in 2023, Analytical Unit condensed previous publications into this report alongside an interactive data [dashboard](#). This report highlights key findings in the 2023 data, but the dashboard provides a comprehensive look into trends and provided users with the ability to explore the data in further detail. As a result, the 'Six Dimensions' bulletins have been discontinued.

## 3. International reputation in 2023

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### Overall rank and score

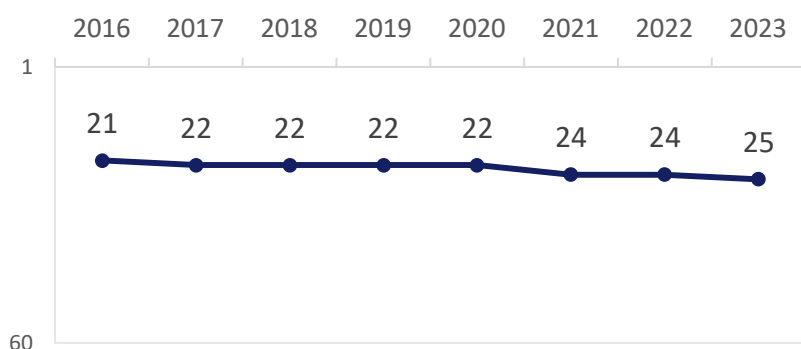
Northern Ireland was ranked 25th out of 60 nations overall (see Figure 1 below) on the Nation Brands Index<sup>SM</sup> (NBI<sup>SM</sup>) in 2023. Ranks are based on NBI<sup>SM</sup> scores from 20 panel nations, and

Northern Ireland achieved an all-time high score of 61.62 out of 100 (see Figure 2 below), maintaining its position in the top-half of 60 countries world-wide since joining the Nation Brands Index<sup>SM</sup> in 2016.

Northern Ireland ranked in the top half of nations despite having the second-smallest population compared with the other nations included on the NBI<sup>SM</sup> [note 1].

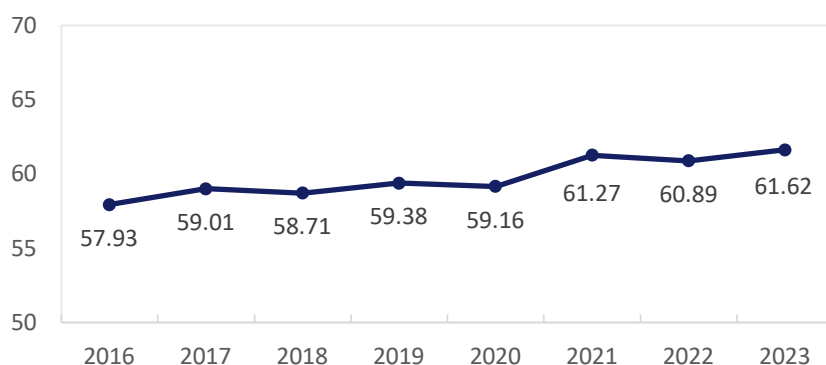
The rank is down one place from 2022. A country's rank is affected by the addition (or removal) of countries to the survey. For example, in 2023 four countries were removed from the NBI<sup>SM</sup> [note 2] and replaced by four new countries. Portugal was one of these new countries and ranked 20<sup>th</sup>. See the [2023 Methodological Report](#) for further details of the countries included in the NBI<sup>SM</sup> each year. Northern Ireland's overall score between 2022 and 2023 also did not increase as much as the 60-nation global average increase, improving by 0.73 points compared with the 60-nation average score change of +0.90 points (see Table 1, page 5).

Figure 1: Northern Ireland's overall NBISM rank, 2016 to 2023



Note: Ranks from 2016 to 2021 were out of 50 countries and from 2021 were out of 60.

Figure 2: Northern Ireland's overall NBISM score (out of 100), 2016 to 2023



<sup>1</sup> Northern Ireland's population (1.9m) was smaller than all nations apart from Iceland (0.37m); Sources: [IMF 2021 population figures](#); [ONS UK population 2021 Census](#).

<sup>2</sup> See [Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index press release](#) for all NBI nations' ranks and scores.

## Relationship between ranks and scores

The scores on the index ranged from a high of 69.85 (Japan, Rank: 1) to 52.30 (Botswana; Rank: 60) out of 100 [see note 2]. This range shows that the nations are closely scored. For example, although Northern Ireland was over 20 places behind Japan, Northern Ireland's score (61.62) was less than nine points from Japan's score. This means even small changes in scores can affect the rank. This also means even if Northern Ireland receives the same scores each year, but other countries' scores gradually improve, NI's rank will start to fall.

## Which country ranks Northern Ireland the highest?

As well as considering how Northern Ireland ranks among the 60 NBI nations overall, we can also consider how each panel country individually ranks the other nations and where Northern Ireland places in those rankings.

For the second year running, Northern Ireland's highest rank (22nd) came from the United States (20th in 2022). France and Italy followed, both ranking NI 23rd this year. Australia, Germany, and the UK ranked NI 24th out of 60.

The biggest positive change came from Saudi Arabia who ranked Northern Ireland 12 places higher this year (36th) compared with last year (48th). The rank from Saudi Arabia is still low, however, and is among the five lowest ranks for Northern Ireland, which also includes South Africa (35th), Russia (37th), India (39th), and China (53rd).

These ranks are consistent with broader regional trends with the highest ranks coming from North America and Western Europe: both regions ranked Northern Ireland 24th in 2023. You can explore more regional data on the [dashboard](#).

Northern Ireland ranks highest on the Dimension of Governance but sees improvements in scores across Culture, Exports, and Immigration and Investment.

To assess a country's reputation, the Nation Brands Index (NBI<sup>SM</sup>) survey includes 23 questions grouped into six themes or 'Dimensions' including: Governance, Immigration and Investment, People, Exports, Tourism, and Culture.

See Table 1 below for scores and ranks for all Dimensions. Breakdowns by region and panel country can be explored on the [dashboard](#).



Table 1: Ranks (out of 60 nations) and scores (out of 100), Northern Ireland, from 2022 to 2023. Includes the average score change across all 60-nations for comparison [note 3].

Dimension	Rank			Score			60-Nation Average Score Change 22-23
	2022	2023	Change 22-23	2022	2023	Change 22-23	
<b>Governance</b>	21	22	-1	60.74	60.38	-0.36	+0.49
<b>Immigration &amp; Investment</b>	23	23	0	57.81	59.34	+1.53	+1.90
<b>People</b>	23	25	-2	65.01	65.30	+0.29	+0.75
<b>Exports</b>	26	28	-2	55.97	57.53	+1.56	+1.32
<b>Tourism</b>	27	28	-1	66.43	66.63	+0.20	+0.24
<b>Culture</b>	34	32	2	59.37	60.57	+1.20	+0.69
<b>Overall</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>60.89</b>	<b>61.62</b>	<b>+0.73</b>	<b>+0.90</b>

## Governance

Governance has ranked highest for Northern Ireland since 2016. In 2023, NI was ranked 22nd out of 60 nations for Governance, down one place from 2022. Northern Ireland's Governance score was down slightly from 2022 (-0.36 to 60.38 in 2023), in contrast with the trend across the 60 nations, where the average score increased (+0.49) for Governance.

## Culture

Culture is the only Dimension of the six to have increased in rank in 2023, rising to 32nd from 34th place in 2022, though it remains the lowest ranking Dimension for Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland's score for Culture also increased from 2022 (+1.20 to 60.57 in 2023). This increase was larger than the increase in the average score for Culture across all 60 nations (+0.69).

## Immigration and Investment and Exports

Two other Dimensions have also increased their scores from 2022, contributing to the overall increase in score for Northern Ireland in 2023. Northern Ireland's score for Immigration and Investment increased by 1.53 points to 59.34, while the average Immigration and Investment score for all 60 nations also increased by 1.90 points. Northern Ireland's score for Exports also improved between 2022 and 2023 (+1.56 to 57.53), while the average Export score for all 60 nations also increased by 1.32 points.

<sup>3</sup> 60-Nation Average Scores can be found on page 13 of [The Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index<sup>SM</sup>. Press Release – Supplemental Report. November 2023](#) (PDF, 2.1MB)

## Northern Ireland's Attributes

We can also look at how Northern Ireland compares with other NBI countries by considering at the ranks of the individual survey questions (or 'Attributes' in the NBI) that are grouped into the Six Dimensions.

See Table 2 below for the average score and rank for each attribute. The score for each attribute is an average of participants' ratings on a scale from one (lowest and worst) to seven (highest and best) with four being neutral.

In 2023, Northern Ireland's top-ranking attributes were for behaving responsibly to protect the environment (21st out of 60), for being rich in natural beauty (21st), for respecting citizens' rights and treating them with fairness (22nd) and for caring about equality in society (22nd). The higher the rank, the more positively a country is viewed on the attribute compared with other countries.

Table 2: Ranks (out of 60 nations) and scores (from 1 to 7) for Attributes, Northern Ireland, from 2022 to 2023.

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Score</i>			<i>Rank</i>		
		2022	2023	Change 22-23	2022	2023	Change 22-23
<b><i>Governance</i></b>	Competent & Honest: whether respondents think each nation is competently and honestly governed	4.60	4.60	0.00	21	23	-2
	Rights & Fairness: whether respondents think each nation respects rights of its citizens and treats them with fairness	4.77	4.71	-0.06	21	22	-1
	Peace & Security: whether respondents think each nation behaves responsibly in international peace and security	4.66	4.62	-0.04	21	23	-2
	Environment: whether respondents think each nation behaves responsibly to protect the environment	4.64	4.64	0.00	21	21	0
	Poverty: whether respondents think each nation behaves responsibly to help reduce world poverty	4.42	4.43	+0.01	21	23	-2
<b><i>Immigration &amp; Investment</i></b>	Work & Live: respondents' willingness to live and work for substantial period in each nation	4.23	4.42	+0.19	23	24	-1
	Quality of Life: whether respondents consider each nation is a place with a high quality of life	4.74	4.80	+0.06	23	24	-1
	Educational Qualifications: whether respondents consider each nation is a good place to study for educational qualifications	4.58	4.62	+0.04	23	25	-2
	Invest in Business: whether respondents feel each nation has businesses they'd like to invest in	4.07	4.21	+0.14	27	28	-1
	Equality in Society: whether respondents feel each nation cares about equality in society	4.59	4.63	+0.04	21	22	-1
<b><i>People</i></b>	Welcoming: whether respondents felt the people from each nation would make me feel very welcome	4.80	4.82	+0.02	23	23	0
	Close Friend: whether respondents would like a person from each nation as close friend	4.80	4.84	+0.04	24	24	0
	Employability: respondents' willingness to hire well-qualified people from each nation.	5.04	5.03	-0.01	23	25	-2
<b><i>Exports</i></b>	Science & Technology: whether the participants feel each nation makes a major contribution to	4.16	4.27	+0.11	31	32	-1

Dimension	Attribute	Score			Rank		
		2022	2023	Change 22-23	2022	2023	Change 22-23
	innovation in science and technology						
	Buy Products: whether respondents feel better or worse about buying products from each nation	4.42	4.52	+0.10	24	25	-1
	Creative Place: whether respondents think each nation is a creative place with cutting-edge ideas and new ways of thinking	4.41	4.49	+0.08	26	26	0
<b>Tourism</b>	Visit if Money No Object: whether respondents would strongly like/not like to visit each nation if money is no object	4.92	4.98	+0.06	23	24	-1
	Natural Beauty: whether respondents feel each nation is rich in natural beauty.	5.26	5.21	-0.05	22	21	+1
	Historic Buildings: whether respondents feel each nation is rich in historic buildings and monuments	4.88	4.90	+0.02	33	33	0
	Vibrant City: whether respondents feel each nation has a vibrant city life and urban attractions	4.80	4.82	+0.02	31	31	0
<b>Culture</b>	Sports: whether respondents feel each nation excels at sports	4.16	4.29	+0.13	32	33	-1
	Cultural Heritage: whether respondents feel that each nation has rich cultural heritage	4.88	4.91	+0.03	33	31	+2
	Contemporary Culture: whether respondents consider each nation as an interesting/exciting place for contemporary culture such as music, films, art, and literature.	4.56	4.62	+0.06	27	28	-1



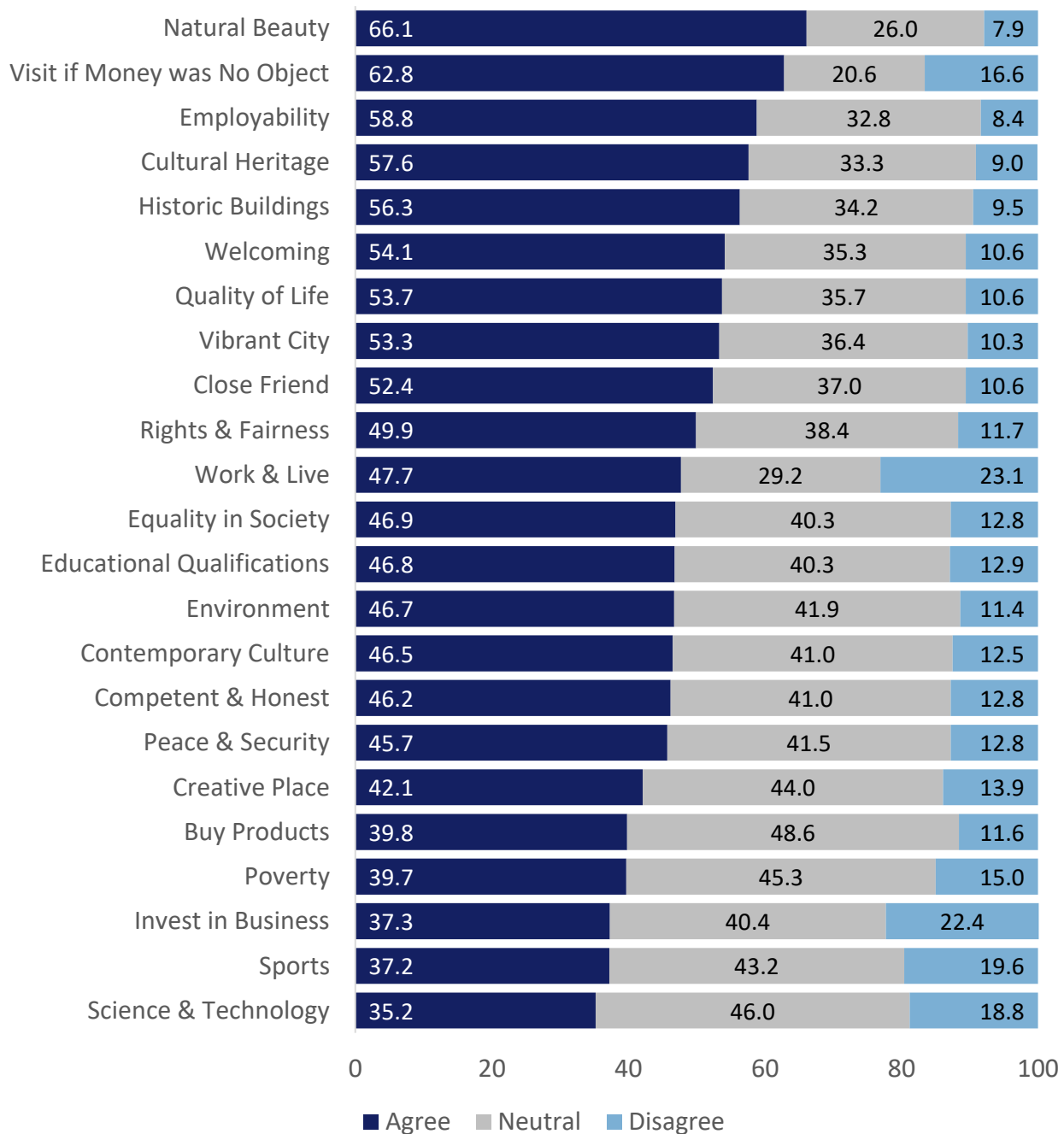
Table 2 also shows that 'rich in natural beauty' is not only a high-ranking attribute but also Northern Ireland's highest *scoring* attribute with an average score of 5.21 out of 7. In fact, Figure 3 below shows 66% of people 'agreed' that NI is a nation 'rich in natural beauty'. Since 2016, 'Natural beauty' has been the highest scoring attribute for NI, and Northern Ireland's natural beauty has been consistently ranked in the top 25 nations. This means it is one of Northern Ireland's strongest and most well-known attributes.

'Employability' was the only other attribute to receive an average score above five (5.03) giving it a rank of 25th out of 60 nations. In 2023, 58.8% of people 'agreed' they would be 'willing to hire a well-qualified person from Northern Ireland', up slightly from 57.7% in 2022.

Opinions were the most strongly divided for whether respondents were 'willing to work and live for a substantial period' in Northern Ireland. Figure 3 below shows the highest proportion of people (23.1%) 'disagreed' with this attribute compared with the other attributes, but a relatively high proportion (47.7%) of people also 'agreed' with the statement and 29.2% were neutral. Despite these divided ratings, however, 'work and live' still ranked 24th out of 60 nations and achieved the biggest increase in score change (+0.19) from 2022 compared with the other attributes (see Table 2).

Other attributes that improved their scores the most from 2022 (and thus contributed to the overall improvement in score for NI) were 'making a major contribution to innovation in science and technology' (+0.11), 'whether each nation has businesses respondents would like to invest in' (+0.14) and 'excelling at sports' (+0.13) (see Table 2). Despite having the biggest improvements from last year, these three attributes were the lowest scoring out of all 23 attributes, with fewer than 38% of respondents agreeing with the statements. Comparing these three attributes with other NBI nations, only 'Invest in Business' ranks above 30, at 28th in 2023 and 27th in 2022.

Figure 3: Percentage of participants who 'agreed', 'disagreed', and were 'neutral' for each Attribute, Northern Ireland, 2023.



## 4. Familiarity with Northern Ireland

Familiarity with Northern Ireland has reached a new high: 61% of people reported they were 'just a little familiar', 'somewhat familiar' or 'very familiar' with Northern Ireland in 2023. The percentages ranged from a high of 85% of people from the UK to a low of 33% from Japan who reported to be at least 'just a little familiar' with NI. Familiarity with NI has been steadily increasing from 51% in 2016. Northern Ireland ranked 44th out of 60 nations in terms of familiarity in 2023.

## 5. Favourability of Northern Ireland

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To determine how favourably a nation is viewed in general, participants rate their overall opinion of each nation on a scale from one (extremely unfavourable) to seven (extremely favourable) with four (neutral). Northern Ireland scored 4.73 out of 7 for overall favourability, reaching a new high since joining the index. Northern Ireland ranked 25th out of 60 participating nations for 'favourability'.

Favourability scores awarded suggest Northern Ireland is consistently viewed positively by all panel countries; none of the twenty panel countries gave Northern Ireland an average favourability score of four or less (four being the 'neutral' score) in any year since 2016 when NI was first included.

## 6. Intention to visit Northern Ireland

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Just over one in three people (35%) said they were 'likely to visit Northern Ireland in the next five years for business or leisure', up four percentage points from 31% in 2022 [note 4]. Northern Ireland received its highest rank from the UK (11th) followed by Italy and the United States (both 14th) in terms of likelihood of visiting NI compared with other countries in the next five years. Least likely to visit NI are China (55th) and Russia (51st).

## 7. Exposure to Northern Ireland

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### Online presence and commerce

Just over one in five (21%) people reported having visited a website from or about Northern Ireland, representing a steady increase from 15% of people in 2016. Compared with other nations, NI ranked 39th for visits to websites.

Fewer people reported having purchased a product or service from NI: 16% in 2023, though this figure has increased from 8% in 2016. Of the 20 panel nations in 2023, Northern Ireland received its highest rank for 'Buying a product or service from Northern Ireland' from the UK at 14th out of 60 nations, with 29% of these respondents reporting having bought a product or service from NI.

### Visitors to Northern Ireland

Around one in five people (19%) reported having visited NI either for business (9%) or holiday (11%). Of the 20 panel nations, Northern Ireland received its highest rank from respondents from the UK (14th) with one in three (33%) of these participants reporting having visited NI. Around one

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<sup>4</sup> 'Intention to visit' was included in the NBI<sup>SM</sup> for the first time in 2022.

in five (18%) participants from the United States reported having visited NI, resulting in Northern Ireland's second highest rank (18th) from the 20 panel nations.

### Exposure to Northern Ireland and scores

Having had exposure to Northern Ireland through visiting websites and buying products or services (see Figure 4 below) or from visiting for business or holiday (see Figure 5 below) is associated with significantly higher ratings on all dimensions of reputation compared with people who do not have those types of exposure to Northern Ireland. This means having personal experience of Northern Ireland positively influences how people see NI. The difference in scores for each of the Six Dimensions was also statistically significant.

Figure 4: Mean scores for Northern Ireland on the NBI and the Six Dimensions among those who had and had not purchased a product or service from NI and/or visited a website from or about NI (2023)

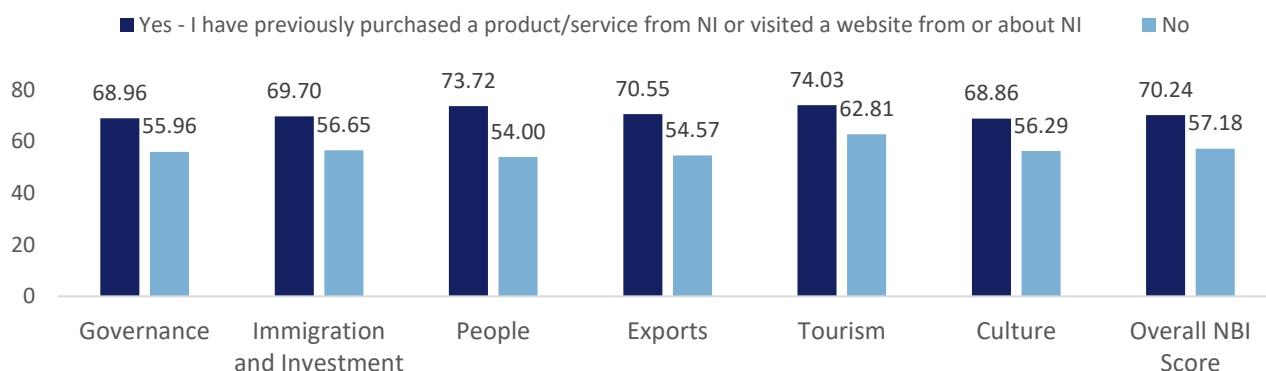
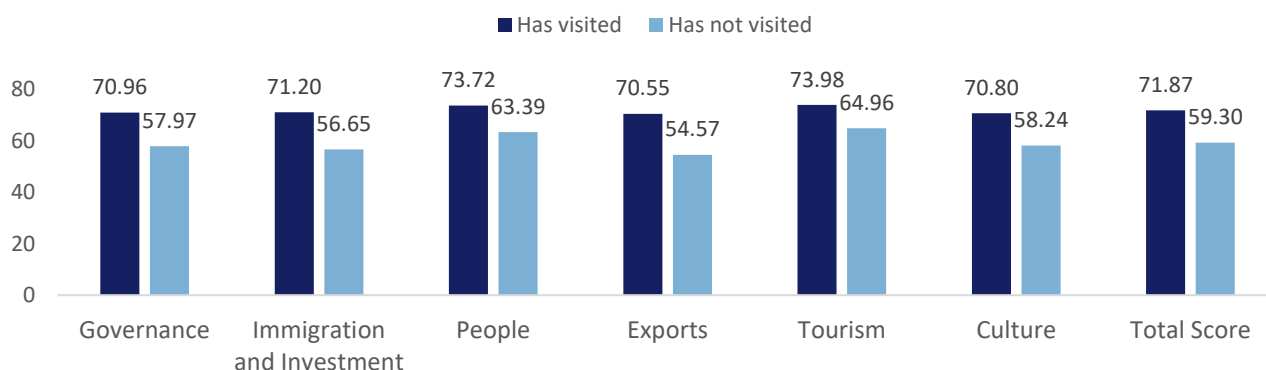


Figure 5: Mean scores for NI on the NBI and the Six Dimensions among those who had and had not previously visited Northern Ireland (2023)



## 8. Data

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Nation Brands Index: 2023 report for Northern Ireland – Tables ([Excel](#) / [ODS](#))

Released 13 December 2023.

Tables contain all data from this report.

## 9. Glossary

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### Score

Average scores are reported for each of the 23 statements, or ‘Attributes’ of reputation scored from one (worst) to seven (best).

These Attributes are combined into ‘Six Dimensions’, and average scores are reported for each Dimension converted into a scale out of 100 (where an increase in score means stronger agreement).

The overall score, (i.e., the Nation Brand Index<sup>SM</sup> score) is an average of the scores for the Six Dimensions.

### Rank

Scores from each nation are ordered from highest to lowest and each country is given a rank from 1 to 60. We can use the rank to understand how Northern Ireland is perceived compared with other nations included in the survey. Ranks are affected by the scores for Northern Ireland and for other countries, but ranks are also affected if new countries are included in the survey. If a new country is included and receives higher scores than Northern Ireland, it may change Northern Ireland’s rank, even if Northern Ireland’s scores improve or stay the same.

## 10. Measuring the data

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To assess and monitor its international reputation, Northern Ireland has been included on the Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index<sup>SM</sup> (NBI<sup>SM</sup>) each year since 2016. The NBI<sup>SM</sup> is an online survey used to measure and rank the reputations of 60 nations across Six Dimensions: Exports; Governance; Culture; People; Tourism; and Immigration and Investment. The market research company [Ipsos](#) conduct the survey design, sample recruitment, survey fieldwork, data collection and cleansing, and initial data analysis for the NBI<sup>SM</sup>.

Each year between June and August, participants from 20 countries (“panel countries”) are asked to give their views and respond to questions about 60 nations around the globe.

Approximately 500 people per panel country answered questions about Northern Ireland in 2023, equating to around 10,000 total responses for NI. Using the most up-to-date online population parameters, the achieved sample in each country was weighted to reflect key demographic characteristics such as age and gender.

More information on the methodology used, including more detail on the survey questions, the 60 participating nations and the 20 panel countries can be found in an accompanying [2023 Methodological Report](#).

## 11. Strengths and limitations

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The data used in the report is collected and provided to The Executive Office by a third party, and as such we are not in control of the data collection methodology. Every effort is taken to quality assure the data, with regular communication with the provider as part of the ongoing development of this report.

## 12. Related links

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[Ipsos Nation Brand Index 2023](#) | Reports and Press Release | Latest release 01 November 2023

[Scotland: Nation Brand Index](#) | Reports | Latest release 10 February 2023

[United Kingdom: Nation Brand Index](#) | Reports | Latest release 11 November 2022

[Wales: Nation Brand Index](#) | Reports | Latest release 16 September 2021

## 13. Contact

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We are interested in understanding more about the quality of this publication and how it is used. This will help us provide a high-quality service which meets users' needs. We would be grateful if you could spend a couple of minutes answering our [User Feedback Survey questions](#).

Further information and copies in alternative formats can be obtained by contacting:

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