

NEW ZEALAND TOPS COVID-19 PERFORMANCE RANKING

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

New Zealand and Vietnam were ranked the best performing countries in their response to the pandemic, according to a COVID-19 “performance index” put together by the Lowy Institute, an Australian think tank, which sought to assess the impact of geography, political systems and economic development in assessing outcomes.

The index, which was based on six different indicators, including confirmed cases and deaths per million people and the scale of testing, sought “to gauge the relative performance of countries”, assessing 98 countries in the 36 weeks that followed their hundredth case.

“Fewer reported cases and deaths, both in aggregate and per capita terms, point towards a better response to the virus,” the Sydney-based think tank said. “More tests conducted on a per capita basis reveal a more accurate picture of the extent of the pandemic at the national level. Lower rates of positive tests, meanwhile, indicate greater degrees of control over the transmission of COVID-19.”

U.S., Brazil worst

India ranked 86 out of 98 countries, while the U.S. stood at 94 and Brazil at the bottom of the index. Taiwan, Thailand and Cyprus were in the top five. Sri Lanka was the best faring nation in South Asia, ranking 10, while the Maldives was at 25, Pakistan at 69, Nepal at 70, and Bangladesh at 84.

The think tank said China was not included “due to a lack of publicly available data on testing”.

Assessing regional responses, the institute found that although the outbreak began in China, the Asia-Pacific region fared the best, while Europe and the U.S. were initially overwhelmed. Europe, however, “registered the greatest improvement over time of any region” before succumbing to a second wave, which it attributed to more open borders.

Population size was one factor. Smaller countries with fewer than 10 million people “consistently outperformed their larger counterparts throughout 2020”.

The level of economic development and regime-type were less significant than expected, which it attributed to “the relatively ‘low-tech’ nature of the health measures used to mitigate the spread of the virus” which “may have created a more level playing field between developed and developing countries”. “In general, countries with smaller populations, cohesive societies, and capable institutions have a comparative advantage in dealing with a global crisis such as a pandemic,” the think tank concluded.

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