



NEWS RELEASE

Canada ranks poorly for testing rates and hospital beds, keys to successful COVID response; prolonged lockdowns deemed ineffective

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For immediate release

VANCOUVER—A detailed statistical analysis of nearly 200 countries and their experiences with and responses to COVID-19 found that Canada ranked poorly compared to other industrialized countries on testing and hospital beds, which were determined to be key in responding to COVID-19, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan, Canadian public policy think-tank.

Global Storm: The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Responses around the World is a new study that analyses the COVID-19 responses of nearly 200 countries around the world over the past year.

“While no two countries tackled COVID-19 the same way, there are important lessons that Canada should learn going forward,” said Livio Di Matteo, an economics professor at Lakehead University, Fraser Institute senior fellow and study author.

The study highlights factors that have been successful at reducing transmission of COVID-19 cases and lowering mortality rates based on a detailed statistical analysis of available data.

The study finds that early and strictly enforced lockdowns did work initially to reduce the spread and mortality, but that prolonged lockdowns instituted later in the pandemic were less effective.

Instead, high rates of testing and access to hospital beds have proven successful at reducing transmission and lowering mortality rates.

Canada ranked 26th out of 35 IMF advanced economies in its COVID-19 tests per million population. Another important factor was the number of hospital beds per 1,000 population as each additional bed was associated with 31.5 fewer COVID-19 deaths per million population.

Among the 35 IMF advanced economies, Canada ranked 32nd in terms of the number of hospital beds per capita, with 2.5 per 1,000 people. Among the advanced economies, hospital beds per 1,000 population ranged from highs of 13.1 in Japan, 12.2 in South Korea to lows of 2.5 in Canada and Denmark, and 2.2 in Sweden.

The study also notes that of the five jurisdictions (China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Canada) that saw more than 100 cases of SARS between 2002 and 2004, Canada has fared the worst during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hong Kong, Singapore, China and Taiwan in 2020 saw their COVID-19 deaths per million range from 0.3 to 22 while Canada’s deaths per million is nearly 500.

“Unlike other countries that suffered from SARS and learned lessons, then introduced mechanisms to respond to such viruses, Canada appears to have learned very little,” commented Di Matteo.

“We are still in the midst of this pandemic, and will be studying how we responded for years to come, but already we’re seeing early signs of the lessons Canada needs to learn from COVID-19,” said Di Matteo.

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