



NEWS RELEASE

High testing rates, hospital beds, and early lockdowns prove crucial to COVID-19 response; later lockdowns deemed ineffective

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VANCOUVER, Canada—A detailed statistical analysis of almost 200 countries using 2020 data determined that high rates of testing, available hospital beds, and early lockdown responses were crucial to managing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, 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 analyses the responses to and impacts of COVID-19 for nearly 200 countries over the past year.

Rates of testing were determined to be critically important with each additional 100,000 tests per million people being associated with 21 fewer COVID-19 deaths per million.

Another important factor that reduced COVID-19 mortality rates was the number of hospital beds per 1,000 people. For example, each additional hospital bed per 1,000 people was associated with 31.5 fewer Covid-19 deaths per million population. Among the advanced economies, hospital beds per 1,000 population ranged from highs of 13.1 in Japan, 12.2 in South Korea and 8.0 in Germany to lows of 2.5 in Canada and Denmark, 2.4 in Singapore and 2.2 in Sweden.

The study found that strictly enforced lockdowns early on did have some effect on reducing case numbers and lowering mortality, but prolonged lockdowns similar to what has been used in many countries, did not significantly reduce longer-term numbers of COVID-19 cases or deaths.

The study also found that it was not deaths from COVID-19 per se that devastated economies, but rather the restrictions and stringency measures enacted to reduce the spread that disrupted an interconnected global economy.

A one unit increase in the Oxford Stringency Index from February 1 to April 1 in 2020, for instance, was associated with an approximate percentage point drop in annual real GDP growth of 0.1 per cent.

“We are still in the midst of this pandemic, and we will be studying how we responded to COVID-19 for years to come, but already we’re seeing early signs of what worked and what didn’t in our effort to reduce transmissions and deaths,” Di Matteo said.

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