

Identifying effective responses to the COVID-19 pandemic

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Toi Hau Tāngata – the Social Wellbeing Agency – has published its analysis into the effectiveness of different government interventions on reducing the impact of different government interventions on reducing the impact of COVID-19.

The analysis involved comparing data on COVID-19 policies to reported case rates in New Zealand and 49 similar countries, investigating policies around containment and closure; economic; health system; and vaccinations; and their association with COVID-19 case numbers.

The key findings are:

- Across the countries examined, the policies most implemented related to containment and closure, such as workplace closures and restriction of movement. These type of policies significantly reduced COVID-19 case numbers.
- About 40% of the time, countries introduced or strengthened policies in multiple areas at the same time (across the four groupings of containment and closure; economic; health system; and vaccinations).
- The introduction of economic policies such as income support is associated with the largest short-term reduction in COVID-19 cases.
- Policies relating to contact tracing and face coverings were associated with significant reductions in cases. Given their lower cost compared with other policies, they are an effective and efficient tool to reduce COVID-19.
- New Zealand had high adherence to stay-at-home requirements.
- Vaccination is highly effective over the medium and long-term, rather than reducing cases in a matter of weeks.

“Governments around the world have had a shared objective of protecting public health and wellbeing while minimising the economic shock of COVID-19. This will continue to be an area of significant interest for researchers and policy-makers, so this analysis is a valuable tool in understanding the impact between different policy interventions and COVID-19 case numbers”, said Renee Graham, Chief Executive of the Social Wellbeing Agency.

“On the home front, Kiwis can be proud of their commitment to following the various policies introduced to keep our communities safe during the last two years in the thick of the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that responding to COVID-19 required large sacrifices from many, in terms of economic, social and mental wellbeing. But the evidence clearly shows they paid off in slowing, and in some cases stopping, the spread of COVID-19.”

The Social Wellbeing Agency works on challenging social-sector problems to improve people’s lives. We focus our efforts on where we can make the greatest impact to lead and shine a light on policy issues that affect the wellbeing of New Zealanders. We collaborate across the system advising on policy issues that fall between the gaps. Ultimately, we want our approaches to achieve sustainable improvements for the wellbeing of New Zealanders.

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