



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S SCIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Professor Sir Peter Gluckman, KNZM FRSNZ FMedSci FRS
Chief Science Advisor

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New Zealand science – well regarded but could do better

It is satisfying to see from the [2011 rankings of Asia-Pacific countries by the leading science journal *Nature*](#) that New Zealand and New Zealand research institutions continue to rank highly despite our relatively low level of investment in basic research.

On a rolling three-year average we rank sixth behind Japan, China, Australia, Singapore and Korea, although in the last year India and Taiwan also outranked us.

Because these rankings are based solely on the number of papers published in the high impact *Nature* family of journals, their interpretation must be guarded. However they do demonstrate that New Zealand science across a diverse range of disciplines can be world class and of high impact.

Nevertheless, in the world rankings also provided by *Nature*, our count of published papers, corrected for population, falls well behind that of other small countries we would like to compare ourselves with, such as Israel, Denmark, Singapore and Finland. Using those numbers, we are performing at about one-third to one-half of the rate we should aspire to, reflecting our lower public investment in research.

It is notable that it is these more robust economies that have recognised the importance of good basic science to economic development. This gives support to the argument that a more linked up science system and one that is funded to international standards would, provided the innovation ecosystem continues to develop, be reflected in significant economic growth.

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