

# RANKED Air Pollution by Economy

Global pollution declined by 31% during the initial COVID-19 lockdowns, demonstrating a link between economic activity and air pollution.

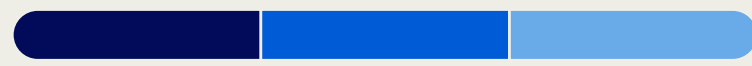
Source: Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (Jul 2020)

Which economies have the highest and lowest levels of air pollution?

Air pollution is measured using fine particulate matter PM<sub>2.5</sub>, which poses the greatest health risk compared with any other pollutant. Numbers indicate micrograms per cubic meter and are annual averages.

INCOME LEVEL OF ECONOMY

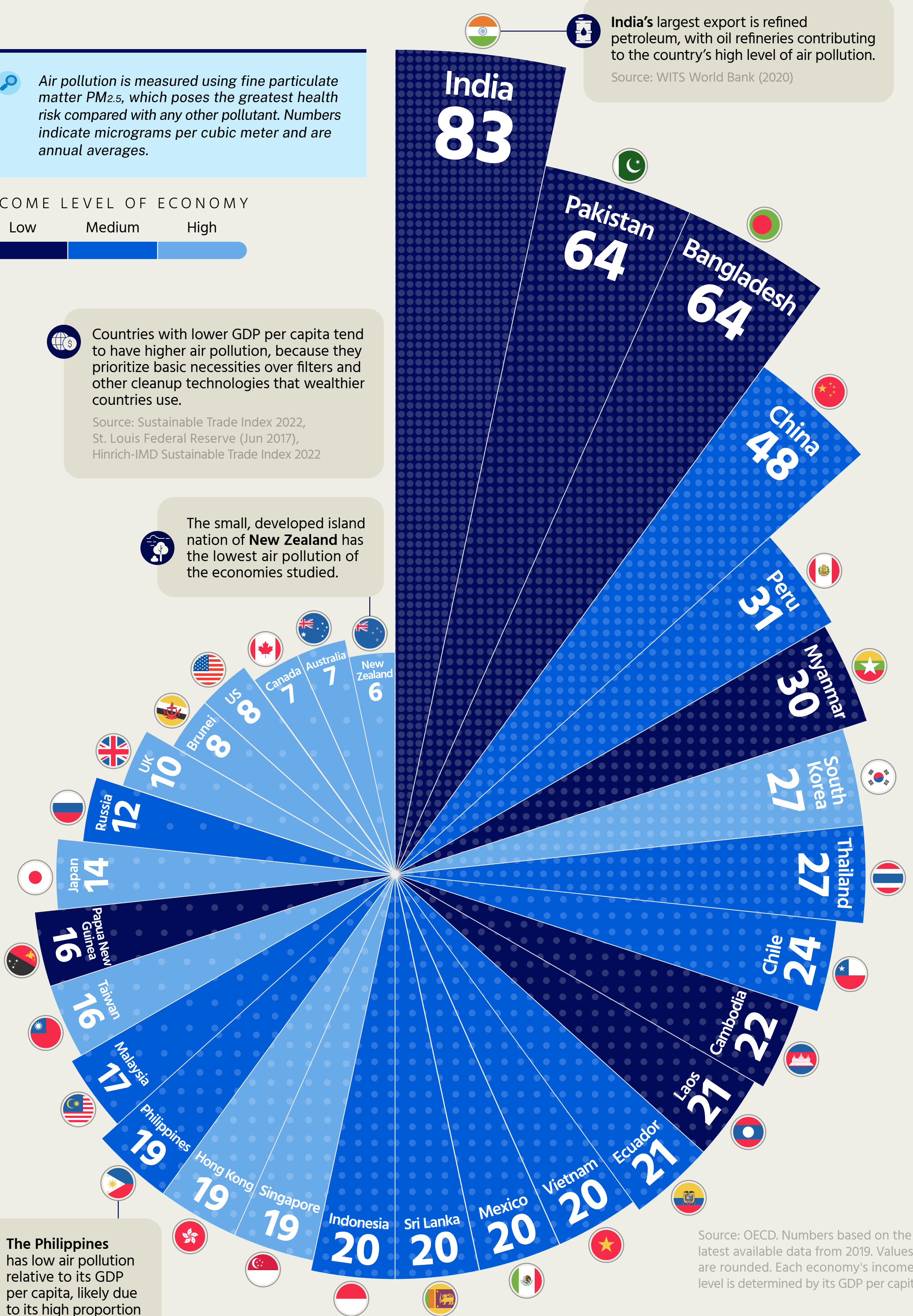
Low Medium High



Countries with lower GDP per capita tend to have higher air pollution, because they prioritize basic necessities over filters and other cleanup technologies that wealthier countries use.

Source: Sustainable Trade Index 2022, St. Louis Federal Reserve (Jun 2017), Hinrich-IMD Sustainable Trade Index 2022

The small, developed island nation of New Zealand has the lowest air pollution of the economies studied.



India's largest export is refined petroleum, with oil refineries contributing to the country's high level of air pollution.

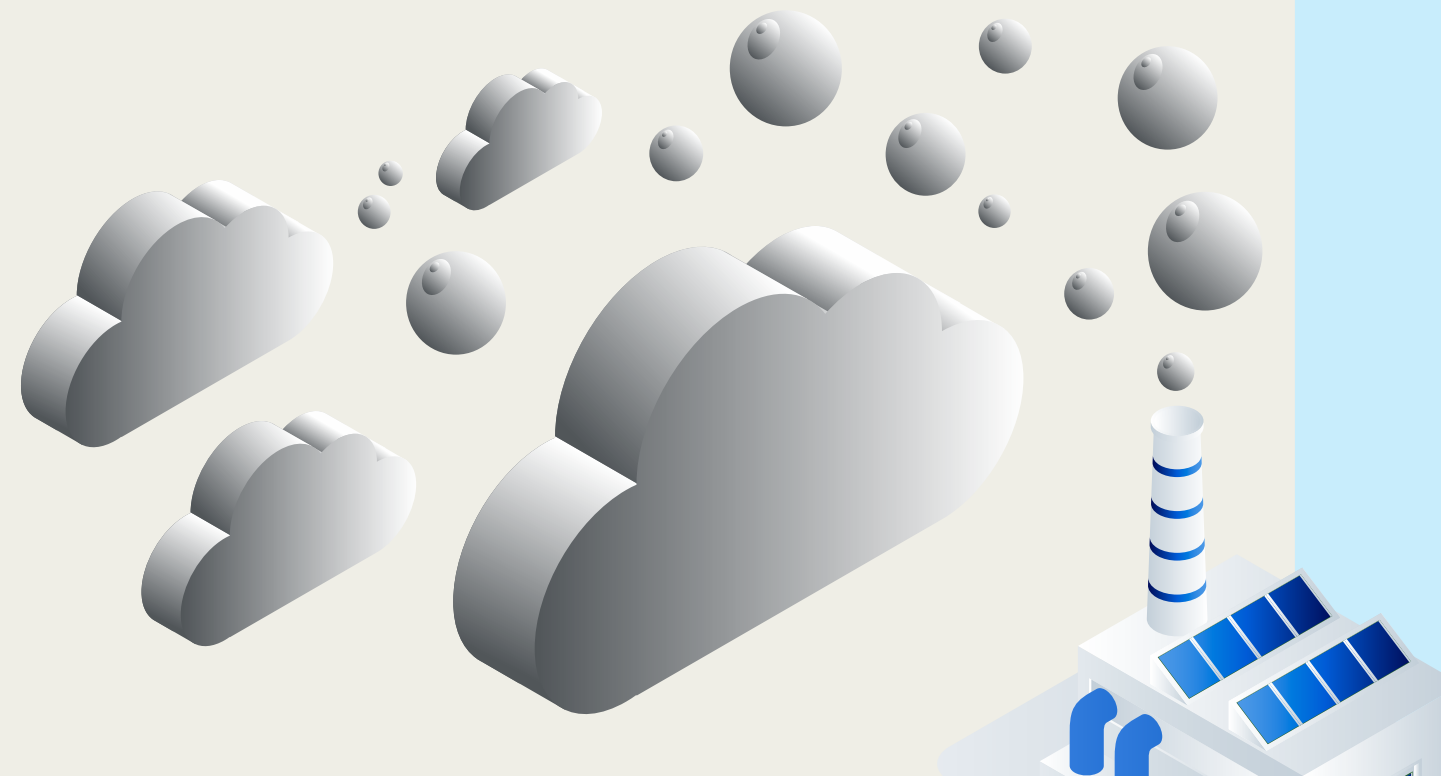
Source: WITS World Bank (2020)

The Philippines has low air pollution relative to its GDP per capita, likely due to its high proportion of renewable energy.

Source: OECD. Numbers based on the latest available data from 2019. Values are rounded. Each economy's income level is determined by its GDP per capita.

Air pollution has severe consequences for the environment and human health, and is worsened by aggressive industrialization.

THE SUSTAINABLE TRADE INDEX measures economies' ability to trade in a way that balances economic growth, societal development, and environmental protection.



To learn more about the Sustainable Trade Index, and to see a comprehensive breakdown of the rankings:

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