

## **The world's best country**

It comes as no surprise to Kiwis that New Zealand regularly tops lists and is awarded the title of "world's best country".

It's not just the landscape, wildlife, or our rugby team that earns us the accolades, but an emphasis on prosperity and a belief in the potential of the country that keeps driving us forward.

That translates into more than just our people being happy to live where they do.

Tourists flock to our shores in droves each year, opportunities for foreigners to work in New Zealand fill up within minutes of being put online, and more people are continuously seeking the chance to call our country home.

The fact that pop stars such as Ed Sheeran visit on holiday, and then make inquiries about citizenship, shows what a desirable place New Zealand is to live and work.

Our geographic isolation is no barrier – while we may be somewhat on our own down the bottom of the world, it has proved no impediment to our development or commitment to being a country of potential.

New Zealand topped the Legatum Prosperity Index last year, coming in ahead of Norway, Finland, Switzerland, Canada and Australia.

We have consistently been at the top of the annual index since 2013.

New Zealand's economic success and reputation as a world-class place for business are just two of the reasons behind our ranking.

The growth of the economy has delivered greater prosperity and opportunities for all New Zealanders, and that is something to be proud of.

Successful businesses are those that recognise prosperity means more than just financial success.

It means enjoying growth – not just for their own business, but for their community and country as a whole.

Inequality has been recognised as a problem for New Zealand, with distribution of wealth and income being noted as a concern with businesses and voters alike.

Our business leaders acknowledge that equality and fairness has never been a more important issue in the context of social policies and cohesion.

New Zealand is a place where it is possible to start a business and get ahead – where the potential to succeed is not restricted by barriers.

This continued focus on New Zealand as a place of prosperity and potential means thriving families, communities, towns and cities.

Business can't be strong without strong communities.

And business has an important role to play in addressing issues of inequality and poverty - without improvement and solutions in our communities New Zealand cannot meet its potential.

Our strong sense of society is another reason why we are ranked highly in comparison to other countries across surveys.

As a factor considered in such results, social strength has been proven to have a significant impact not only on wellbeing, but on economic growth as well.

The 2016 Legatum Prosperity Index described New Zealand's "mighty social capital performance" as being "at the heart of its success".

That means businesses operating in a culture where they want to see the communities their staff come from thriving and growing, and to make positive changes in those communities.

The biggest risk to our success as a prosperous country is complacency – we must continue to lift living standards for all New Zealanders, listen and respond to challenges, and use fresh thinking in innovation.

New Zealand punches above its weight in so many areas – our focus on sustainability and environmental issues helps contribute to the image of a country that cares about the people that live there, and about their futures.

We want to see this prosperity sustained for years to come, so New Zealand continues to be viewed as an attractive place to live and work, and keeps drawing in top talent to contribute to that.

*Kirk Hope is Chief Executive BusinessNZ [www.businessnz.org.nz](http://www.businessnz.org.nz)*