

Vulnerability Index Results for 2012

Summary

According to the RSN 2012 rural vulnerability index rural authorities became relatively more vulnerable in 2012 than 2011. At District level coastal rural authorities have suffered particularly badly and 5 of the 10 most vulnerable authorities are now both coastal and rural. At first tier level 7 of the 24 rural authorities studied for the index are in the top 25% of all authorities including London Boroughs and the most vulnerable is Northumberland which is the 16th most vulnerable authority in England in 2016.

The Vulnerability Index

The Vulnerability Index was developed in response to the challenge of measuring the impact of the recession on local authority areas. Traditional measures of need such as the Index of Multiple Deprivation concentrate on current circumstances. In view of the deep seated and long term changes, which are likely to change the current configuration of long term prosperity and sustainability in English Communities, the RSN identified the need to develop an index of vulnerability to change, to sit alongside more traditional measures of need.

The index identified vulnerability by looking at:

Wage levels, the current stock of public sector jobs, the number of JSA claimants and the percentage of the population which is working age. You can access a more detailed note explaining why these indicators were chosen and the data sources used.

Our index is simple and easily understood. The spreadsheet which accompanies this narrative allows you to compare your authority against all other authorities and benchmark its relative vulnerability within key categories of authorities – such for example as other districts in a given county and all other predominantly rural authorities. You simply need to click on the drop down menu at the side of the local authority name displayed in the spreadsheet and choose your authority to generate a listing of your relative vulnerability.

2012 Results

This is the second year of our development of the index and comparing the relative position of authorities between the two indexes provides some interesting context for authorities thinking about the impact of the recession in their area.

At first tier level the top 10 most vulnerable authorities in 2011 and 2012 were as set out in the table below:

Ranking 2011	Ranking 2012
Blackpool	Blackpool
Sefton	Torbay
Torbay	Sefton
Wolverhampton	Wolverhampton
NE Lincs	Darlington
Southend	Middlesborough

Darlington	Wirral
Wirral	Blackburn
Middlesbrough	Dudley
Doncaster	Stoke

The most vulnerable RSN member authority in both years was Northumberland which was 21st in the index in 2011 and in 2012 is 16th.

Whilst none of these authorities are RSN members a number have key service centre roles for rural communities – particularly Torbay, Darlington and North East Lincolnshire.

At district level a number of RSN member authorities are in the top 10 of the most vulnerable authorities:

Ranking 2011	Ranking 2012
Thanet	Thanet
Hastings	Boston*
Boston*	Eastbourne
Scarborough*	North Devon*
Shepway*	Hastings
Eastbourne	Waveney*
Great Yarmouth	Tendring*
Weymouth and Portland	Weymouth and Portland
Tendring*	Wyre
Worthing	Shepway*

Interestingly 4 of the most vulnerable authorities within the top 10 were RSN members in 2011 and in 2012 the figure has risen to 5, with North Devon moving from the 12th most vulnerable district in 2011 to the 4th in 2012. This change appears to have been driven by a significant increase in JSA claimants, from a very low base of 159th out of 201 to 99th out of 201.

All of the authorities in the top 10 over both years which are RSN members are also coastal and in a number of these authorities such as Tendring and Boston their economic vulnerability is further challenged by their vulnerability to flood risk.

Key sub-regional service centre towns within a number of these authorities such as Boston, Clacton, Lowestoft, Scarborough, Folkestone and Barnstaple give them a disproportionate dependence on public sector jobs.

At first tier level the relative position of RSN member authorities was as follows:

Authority	Ranking 2011	Ranking 2012	Change
Cambridgeshire	144	115	-29
Cheshire East	83	90	+7
Cheshire West and Chester	79	60	-19
County Durham	51	52	+1
Cornwall	37	26	-11
Cumbria	74	47	-27
Devon	42	33	-9
Dorset	40	34	-6
East Riding	56	43	-13
Hampshire	120	120	0
Herefordshire	44	39	-5
Isle of Wight	14	18	+4
Lincolnshire	32	26	-6
Norfolk	45	47	+2
North Lincolnshire	56	77	+21
North Somerset	97	108	+11
North Yorkshire	74	79	+5
Northumberland	21	16	-5
Oxfordshire	119	118	-1
Rutland	85	50	-35
Shropshire	27	25	-2
Somerset	39	45	+6
Suffolk	58	63	+5
Wiltshire	70	80	+10

In 2011 5 RSN authorities were in the worst 25% of authorities on the list: Cornwall, Isle of Wight, Lincolnshire and Northumberland and Shropshire. In 2012 this has risen to 7: Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Isle of Wight, Lincolnshire, Northumberland and Shropshire. Apart from the Isle of Wight all the other authorities in 2012 had become relatively more vulnerable than in 2011.

Overall 13 authorities became relatively more vulnerable whilst 10 became relatively less vulnerable and one (Hampshire) retained its previous ranking.

Significant increases in relative vulnerability (10 places or more) occurred in: Cambridgeshire, Cheshire West and Chester, Cornwall, Cumbria, East Riding and Rutland. Overall the level of relative decline for first tier RSN authorities which slipped down the list were higher than the levels of relative improvement for first tier RSN authorities which rose up the list.

Northumberland continues to be the most vulnerable RSN authority and Hampshire the least vulnerable.