

Vulnerability Index Results for 2012

Summary

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. 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.

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 |
| Middlesborough | 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.