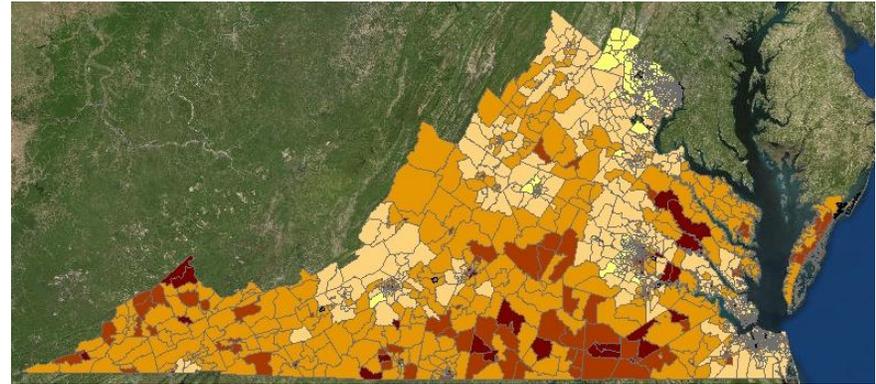


Social Vulnerability Quick Facts

What is Social Vulnerability?

Social vulnerability refers to the characteristics of an individual or group that impacts their ability to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from a physical hazard. The level of social vulnerability is dependent on physical, social, economic, and environmental factors. As social vulnerability in a population increases, their resiliency to natural hazards decreases. Knowing where vulnerability of individuals lies in a population can help governments and policy makers better aid their communities in the event of a natural disaster like sea level rise.



What is the Social Vulnerability Index?

The Social Vulnerability Index (SoVI®) uses census tract data and is a useful tool for government officials and policymakers to identify vulnerable communities that may need help in preparing for and dealing with a potential environmental hazard. This index takes many different vulnerability factors and boils them down to an easy to interpret social vulnerability score which can be ranked relative to other areas.

What is Cluster Analysis?

Like the SoVI®, cluster analysis takes lots of vulnerability factors and boils them down to an easy to interpret measure of social vulnerability. But unlike SoVI®, cluster analysis groups “like” observations into clusters that share similar characteristics. Researchers can then analyze the characteristics of each cluster and determine if the area is socially vulnerable. This method allows differences in localities to be taken into account. For example, a factor that would make a rural community vulnerable may not have the same effect on an urban community.

How can the SoVI® and cluster analysis help communities address natural hazards like SLR?

Social Vulnerability is important for government officials and policy makers to understand about the localities they are working with. Communities without the funds to adapt, recover, or respond to a natural hazard must be identified. Things like age, income, race, language, or access to transportation can be factors that impact in how a community will respond to something like sea level rise. Knowing where social vulnerability lies in a community can lead local governments to make better choices in things like resource allocation, outreach, or even housing development. Our portal arms Virginian officials with the means to discover the areas of need in their communities and make better informed decisions in the face of things like sea level rise.