

Indicator 46. Viability and Adaptability to Changing Economic Conditions of Forest-Dependent Communities, Including Indigenous Communities

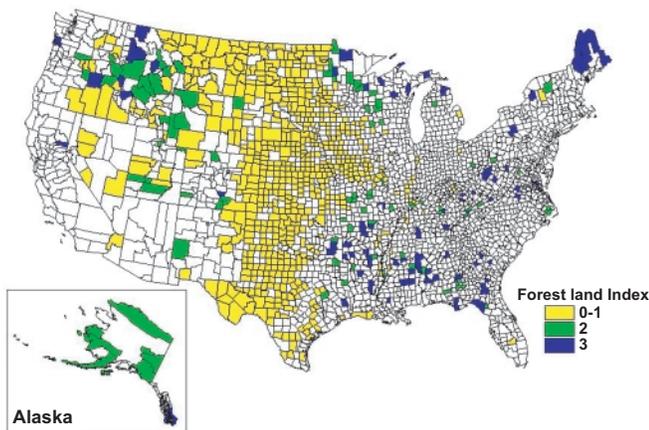


Figure 46-1. Counties with low viability and adaptability to changing economic conditions. Forest land area index 0-1 = low, 2 = medium, and 3 = high.

What Is the Indicator and Why Is It Important?

Indicator 46 takes a broad view of how sustainable forest management influences social well-being, which includes the expected concerns about determinants of economic well-being (often measured by jobs) as well as concerns about community well-being. Attempting to define the propensity of communities to be viable and adaptable in response to changing economic conditions creates an understanding of the set of conditions that might persist over an indefinite future.

What Does the Indicator Show?

Using county-level data, a composite measure was developed that combined population density, lifestyle

diversity, and economic resiliency. The ratings for the 3,110 counties, boroughs, and county/city combinations were arrayed in ascending order, and those with the lowest composite scores were assigned a low rating. There were 837 counties assigned a low rating, designating them as areas in which concerns exist about the viability and adaptability of the associated communities. Those counties represent 36 percent of the area of the United States, but they represent less than 3 percent of the U.S. population. The rest of the population is roughly divided among the 2,064 counties assigned medium ratings and the 209 counties assigned high ratings. In terms of forest-dependent communities, 742 counties are heavily forested, but only 14 percent of those counties are classified as having low viability and adaptability. Indicator 46 also addresses areas with indigenous communities. In the United States, 66 counties and boroughs have significant American Indian or Native American Alaskan populations. Regionally, most of the affected population lives in the East, while most of the affected area is in the West (figure 46-1).

Why Can't the Entire Indicator Be Reported at This Time?

The lack of comprehensive community-level databases (except in some unique cases, such as the Pacific Northwest, which has been assembled as part of ecoregion assessments) limits the ability to assess community viability and adaptability and the relations among local, regional, and national scales. Even where the data has been assembled, severe limitations remain for measuring certain elements of community viability and adaptability. Also, little guidance is available for how to scale community information upward to broader spatial scales.