

## Which Kentucky Communities Are Most Able and Which Are Most Vulnerable to Take Advantage of the Shift to Remote Work

By Dr. Alison Davis, CEDIK Executive Director

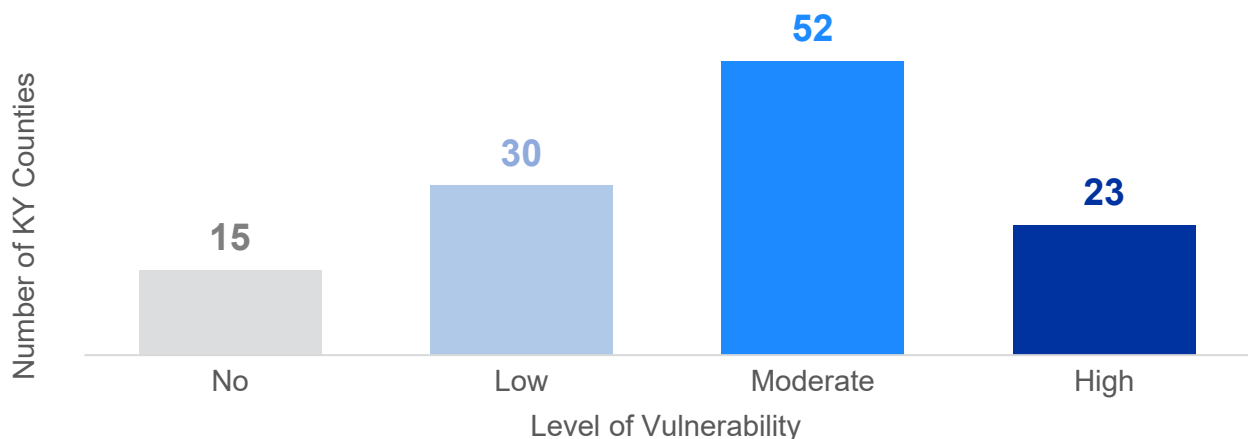
Written by Roberto Gallardo and Richard Florida<sup>1</sup> and adapted for Kentucky communities by the author

The authors explore two factors when assessing a county's readiness for remote work: the availability of digital connectivity and/or the share of workers employed in industries and occupations that are amenable to remote work. "If a particular county has both limited digital connectivity and a higher share of non-remote work workers, it will more than likely struggle to leverage e-learning and remote work. We looked at the geography of remote work across America's 3,000 plus counties."

The analysis for Kentucky reveals that 75 of Kentucky's counties are considered moderately or highly vulnerable to the remote work shift. The map below highlights county-by-county analysis. Kentucky rural communities tend to be more vulnerable for two reasons: access to high-speed broadband and a large share of employment is based in manufacturing, healthcare, and retail trade. For most of those industries it is a challenge to "bring work home."

### Kentucky Counties Vulnerable to Shift to Remote Work

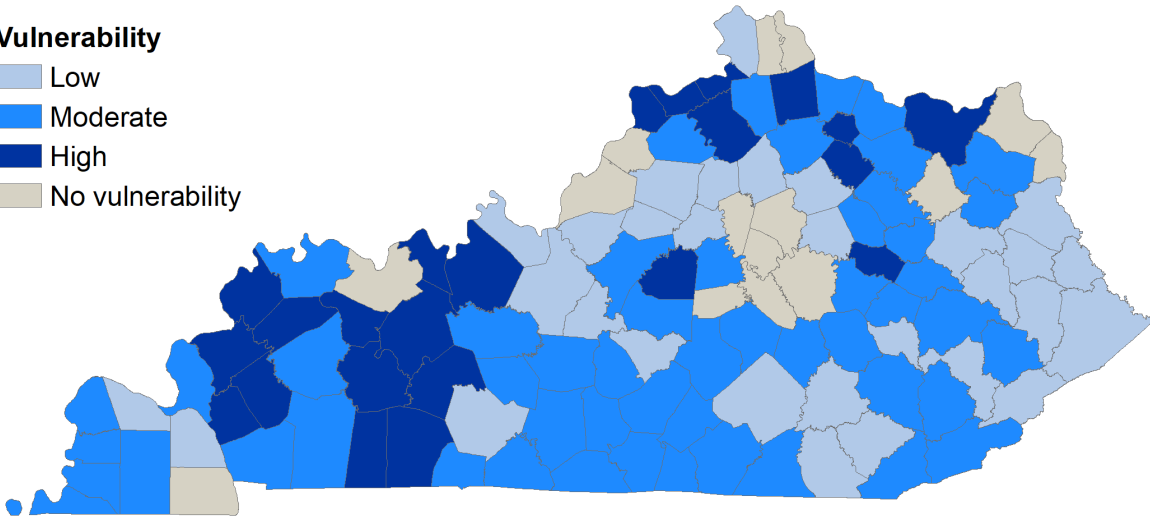
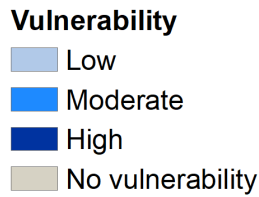
Over 62% of Kentucky's counties are considered moderately or highly vulnerable to the remote work shift.<sup>2</sup>



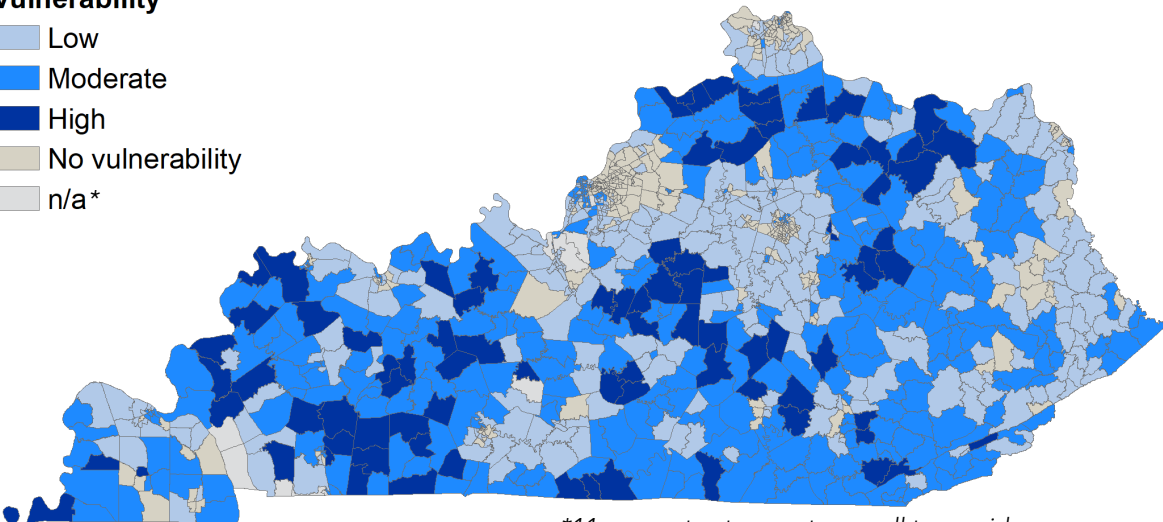
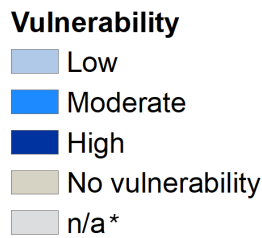
<sup>1</sup> Full article by Gallardo and Florida: <https://pcrd.purdue.edu/blog/remote-work-and-the-coronavirus.php>

<sup>2</sup> Access to broadband is measured through the FCC which does not always fully reflect true conditions and overstates access.

## Kentucky Counties Vulnerable to Shift to Remote Work



## Kentucky Census Tracts Vulnerable to Shift to Remote Work



*\*11 census tracts were too small to provide a measure.*

### What does this mean?

Not all counties are equally suited to shift to remote work during the COVID-19 crisis. This analysis also does not account for an employer's ability to shift to a remote work system (including mindset, information technology, etc.). Not surprisingly, more urban areas are less vulnerable than rural areas, but even within urban and rural areas, the ability to access consistent high-speed broadband is mixed.

If it's a challenge for employees to remote work due to lack of broadband access, it will also be a challenge for students to access online learning materials. In addition, it is a challenge for individuals to socially connect through FaceTime, Zoom, etc. Many rural communities have relied on accessing public Wi-Fi through libraries, schools, and McDonalds. With those entities closed, access is greatly diminished.

## What can we do?

Right now...

- We don't assume everyone has access to the same resources we do and we don't isolate individuals.
- We are patient with everyone and understand that it may take longer to get responses back or deliverables.
- We use our cell phones to connect, where service is available.
- We call people to make sure they are okay and to socially connect.

To prepare for next time...

- Consider portable technologies like MiFi (Wi-Fi hotspots) that households can borrow. Schools, libraries, and other non-profit entities could host the equipment. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- As a community, identify the pockets of the county that do not have access. This gives first responders, non-profits, etc. ideas about where to deploy resources first. Click [here](#) to learn more about how to assess connectivity.
- Employers can assess current capacity for remote work and then create a plan to expand access. Click here to [learn](#) more about creating an effective teleworking program.

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