

MAY 2025

Mapping progress: findings from the Gender Equality Index UK

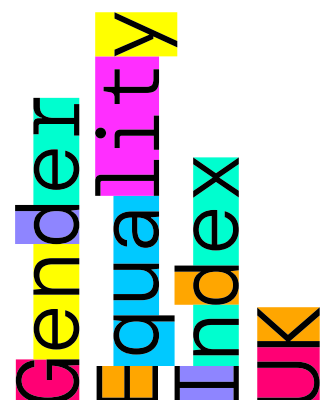
Executive summary

Dr Caitlin Schmid
Dr Chimdimma Noelyn Onah
Professor Anne Laure Humbert
Dr Victor Sojo Monzon
Dr Minna Cowper-Coles



KING'S
BUSINESS
SCHOOL

KING'S GLOBAL
INSTITUTE
FOR WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP



Acknowledgements

The Gender Equality Index UK (GEIUK) was developed by the Global Institute for Women's Leadership (GIWL) at King's College London with funding from Lloyds Banking Group. The findings and conclusions are of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Lloyds Banking Group.

Caitlin Schmid led the development of the GEIUK, assisted by Chimdimma Noelyn Onah and Minna Cowper-Coles, and in close collaboration with Anne Laure Humbert (University of Gothenburg) and Victor Sojo (University of Melbourne). At GIWL, Heejung Chung, Rosie Campbell, Rose Cook and George May advised on the project.

We are especially grateful to the advisory board for sharing their expertise throughout the development of the GEIUK, including Zaimal Azad (Nottingham Women's Centre), Mark Elliot (Cathie Marsh Institute, University of Manchester), Viginta Ivaškaitė-Tamošiūnė (Independent expert), Iñaki Permanyer (Institution for Research and Advanced Studies, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), Jonathan Rankin (Visiting Research Fellow, GIWL), Jill Rubery (Work and Equalities Institute, University of Manchester), Mary-Ann Stephenson (Women's Budget Group), Emma Thackray (Women's Budget Group), Lizzie Ville (Fawcett Society) and Paul Williamson (Equality Hub, Cabinet Office).

We would also like to thank the 24 experts who contributed invaluable insights during the November 2020 workshop to develop the conceptual framework of GEIUK.

Further, we are grateful for the opportunity to have presented early iterations of the index to colleagues at the European Commission Joint Research Centre's Competence Centre on Composite Indicators and Scoreboards, the International Labour Organization Department of Statistics, ONS Local, the Decision and Cognitive Sciences Research Centre at the University of Manchester, the Greater London Authority and the Resolution Foundation.

Many thanks to Marina Willer and the team at Pentagram for the GEIUK visual identity.

Foreword



Professor Heejung Chung

DIRECTOR OF THE GLOBAL INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

The United Kingdom stands at a crossroads, facing economic challenges, regional disparities and persistent inequalities that define the socioeconomic landscape of our time. Such challenges demand tools that can reveal not only the problems we face but also the pathways to a better future. The Gender Equality Index UK (GEIUK) is precisely such a tool, shedding light on the interwoven threads of gender, social inequalities and geography that shape lives across the United Kingdom.

As the first index to measure, map and analyse the socioeconomic outcomes of women and men across all UK local authorities, the GEIUK represents a transformative step forward. It captures the nuanced realities of gender disparities, extending beyond traditional metrics to address unpaid work, participation in leadership and the health of our communities. This comprehensive approach is vital as we confront pressing challenges: the persistent North-South divide, the ongoing economic recovery from pandemic disruptions and the urgent need to address stagnant productivity.

The findings of the GEIUK are stark yet hopeful: while no local authority has achieved full gender equality, those that come closest also experience higher socioeconomic outcomes for all. This suggests a profound opportunity – not just to close gender gaps, but to drive inclusive regional growth and shared prosperity.

The GEIUK does not present an abstract challenge; it provides actionable insights for policymakers, advocates and communities to bridge the divides that persist. In doing so, it invites us to see gender equality not as an isolated goal but as a foundation for resilient, equitable and thriving local economies.

Achieving these outcomes will require bold leadership, innovative policy solutions and a collective commitment to address entrenched barriers to equity. As we look to the future, let this report inspire the courage to think innovatively, act decisively and prioritise fairness in all that we do. The journey to gender equality is also the journey to a stronger United Kingdom.

Executive summary

The Gender Equality Index UK (GEIUK) is the first index to comprehensively measure, map and analyse the socioeconomic outcomes of women and men across all local authorities in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Combining existing data from 2021 to 2023, the GEIUK provides an innovative data tool to compare outcomes across six key domains: paid work, unpaid work, money, power & participation, education and health. It is unique in highlighting how gender and geographic inequalities intersect to shape women's and men's outcomes in both public and private spheres. Table 1 summarises the indicators within each domain.

In addition to its national scope, granularity and comprehensive framework, the GEIUK is novel in that it goes beyond simply comparing women's and men's outcomes. Rather, it contextualises gender gaps by additionally measuring how well both women and men locally fare compared to the national average. This approach is especially important given the persistent gender and geographic disparities in the United Kingdom (UK).

The GEIUK achieves this by offering three distinct but complementary measures to capture inequalities both between and among women and men:

- Gender Equality Measure: Highlights gaps between women and men locally, irrespective of the direction of (dis)advantage.

- Women's Outcomes Measure: Highlights gaps between women locally and women nationally.
- Men's Outcomes Measure: Highlights gaps between men locally and men nationally.

The GEIUK reveals that while no local authority has achieved parity between women and men, the evidence suggests that greater gender equality benefits everyone. Higher levels of gender equality often coincide with higher socioeconomic outcomes for both women and men, while lower gender equality is usually linked to poorer outcomes. Moreover, areas with higher equality tend to show greater economic activity, higher productivity, better wages and lower deprivation levels. These findings underscore that gender equality should not only be pursued as a goal in itself but as a pathway to inclusive growth and regional development.

The interactive website (genderequalityindex.uk) visualises the magnitude of gender and geographic inequalities, enabling policymakers, researchers, advocates and the general public to explore the uneven geography of gender equality across the UK. It provides a robust and accessible evidence base to inform local and national initiatives aimed at bridging gender and geographic divides by identifying where inequalities are most pronounced, where gains can be made and how targeted interventions ensure that economic and social benefits are equitably distributed across the UK.

Table 1. Overview of domains, subdomains and indicators constituting the GEIUK.

Domain	Subdomain	Indicator
PAID WORK	Employment	Employment rate
		Supervisors and professionals
	Quality of work	Progression opportunities
		Involvement in decision-making
UNPAID WORK	Care and domestic work	Daily childcare
		Weekly domestic work
MONEY	Pay	Weekly median pay
		Not in low pay
	Home equity	Homeowners with a mortgage
POWER & PARTICIPATION	Leadership	Company leadership
		Councillors
	Participation	Participation in civil society
		Voted in the general election
EDUCATION	Qualifications	Level 4 qualifications or above
	Skills	English GCSE
		Maths GCSE
HEALTH	Life expectancy and good health	Life expectancy
		Healthy life years
		Good health

Key findings from the Gender Equality Index UK

1.

No local authority in the UK has achieved full gender equality.

2.

Gender equality is greatest in London and the North West, but it is not all good news.

3.

Gender equality is lowest in areas where both women and men are falling behind.

4.

Four distinct types of gender equality exist across the UK: from 'Prime parity' and 'Equal erosion' to 'Partial progress' and 'Deep disparities'.

5.

Gender equality is not a zero-sum game - it flourishes where both women and men do well.

6.

Gender equality is associated with greater productivity and economic activity, but not with levels of deprivation.

7.

Gender inequalities are especially large in the domain of Unpaid Work and Power & Participation.

8.

Men spending more time on unpaid work is associated with greater gender equality and higher outcomes for men.

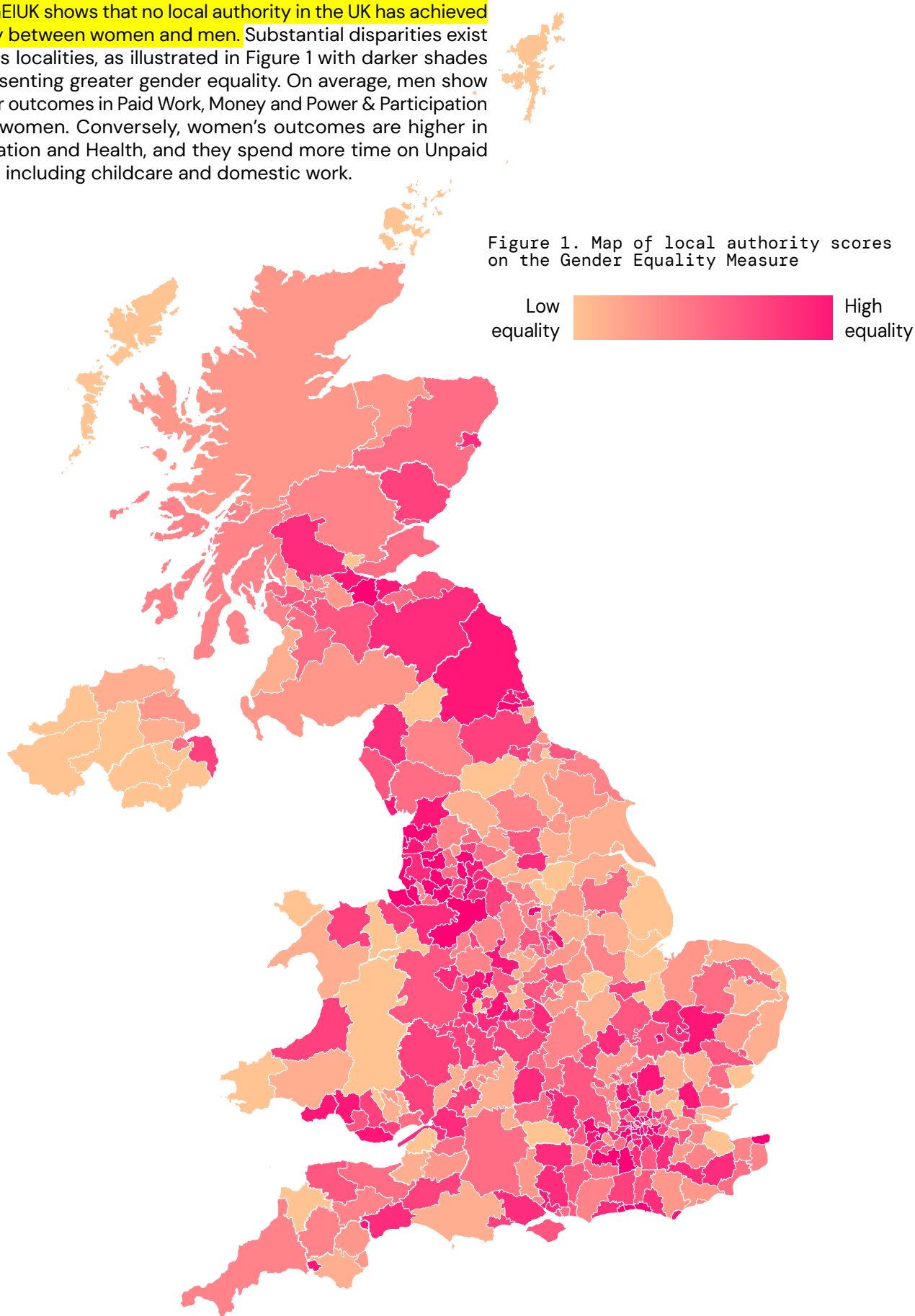
9.

Great divergence in socioeconomic outcomes confirms the North-South divide.

Findings in detail

1.

The GEIUK shows that no local authority in the UK has achieved parity between women and men. Substantial disparities exist across localities, as illustrated in Figure 1 with darker shades representing greater gender equality. On average, men show higher outcomes in Paid Work, Money and Power & Participation than women. Conversely, women’s outcomes are higher in Education and Health, and they spend more time on Unpaid Work, including childcare and domestic work.



2.

Gender equality is greatest in London and the North West, but it is not all good news. The 10 most gender-equal local authorities are concentrated in London and the North West, as shown in Table 2. However, the dynamics differ significantly between these localities, illustrating that a narrow gender gap in and of itself is not necessarily a good thing – it depends on the overall outcomes for both women and men. Considering gender gaps in conjunction with women's and men's local outcomes exposes different 'types of gender equality', explained in more detail below.

In London, areas like Kingston upon Thames and Hammersmith and Fulham showcase high gender equality and high outcomes for both women and men,

reflecting shared progress. They therefore fall into the category of places we describe as 'Prime parity' – areas where both gender equality and women's and men's outcomes are particularly high.

Conversely, in the North West, areas such as Blackpool, Manchester and the Wirral achieve high gender equality but only because women and men there have similarly poor outcomes – hence they are in our category of places experiencing 'Equal erosion'.

Finally, we find high levels of gender equality with moderate outcomes for women and men in South Ribble, Worthing and Wyre – examples of 'Partial progress'.

Table 2. Top and bottom 10 local authorities for gender equality.

Local authority	Region	Type of gender equality
Top 10		
Hammersmith and Fulham	London	Prime parity
Kingston upon Thames	London	Prime parity
Lambeth	London	Prime parity
Waltham Forest	London	Prime parity
Blackpool	North West	Equal erosion
Manchester	North West	Equal erosion
Wirral	North West	Equal erosion
South Ribble	North West	Partial progress
Worthing	South East	Partial progress
Wyre	North West	Partial progress
Bottom 10		
Clackmannanshire	Scotland	Deep disparities
Derry City and Strabane	Northern Ireland	Deep disparities
East Lindsey	East Midlands	Deep disparities
Fenland	East of England	Deep disparities
Fermanagh and Omagh	Northern Ireland	Deep disparities
Merthyr Tydfil	Wales	Deep disparities
Mid Ulster	Northern Ireland	Deep disparities
Na h-Eileanan Siar (Outer Hebrides)	Scotland	Deep disparities
Orkney Islands	Scotland	Deep disparities
Richmondshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	Deep disparities

3.

In contrast, gender equality is lowest in areas where both women and men are falling behind. The bottom 10 local authorities exhibit consistently low gender equality scores with a notable trend: women's and men's outcomes are also well below the national average. These areas exemplify a type of gender equality we term 'Deep disparities', where gender equality is low, along with both women's and men's socioeconomic outcomes.

Spread across the four nations, many of these bottom-ranking local authorities share economic challenges following the decline of their traditional industries, such as manufacturing, agriculture or fishing. The patterns exposed by the GEIUK highlight a pressing need for targeted investment to raise gender equality levels while improving the economic and structural conditions in an area.

4. The rankings of local authorities exemplify four distinct 'types of gender equality' existing across UK local authorities that emerge when analysing the GEIUK measures in combination. These are summarised in Table 3 and mapped across the UK in Figure 2. The types underscore the diverse ways in which gender equality manifests within the socioeconomic landscapes of different regions. The four types of gender equality comprise:

Prime parity

This indicates local authorities where both women and men experience the highest socioeconomic outcomes alongside the highest levels of gender equality. Concentrated in the East of England (e.g. St Albans), London (e.g. Wandsworth) and the South East (e.g. Guildford), these areas benefit from robust local productivity and high economic activity among women and men, paired with low levels of deprivation. This type highlights the potential for aligning gender equality with prosperity for both genders.

Equal erosion

While the second type also shows higher levels of gender equality, these sit alongside poor outcomes for both women and men. Predominantly found in the North West (e.g. Blackpool), Wales (e.g. Neath Port Talbot) and the West Midlands (e.g. Stoke-on-Trent), these areas face higher levels of deprivation and lower local productivity. This type illustrates that a narrow gender gap can also emerge from shared challenges.

Partial progress

This describes local authorities where women and men achieve moderate outcomes and exhibit moderate levels of gender equality. This is the most widespread type, with significant representation across all four nations. However, it is particularly concentrated in Scotland (e.g. Midlothian), the South East (e.g. Canterbury) and the South West (e.g. South Somerset). These areas typically show average productivity, economic activity rates and deprivation levels, pointing to opportunities for further progress.

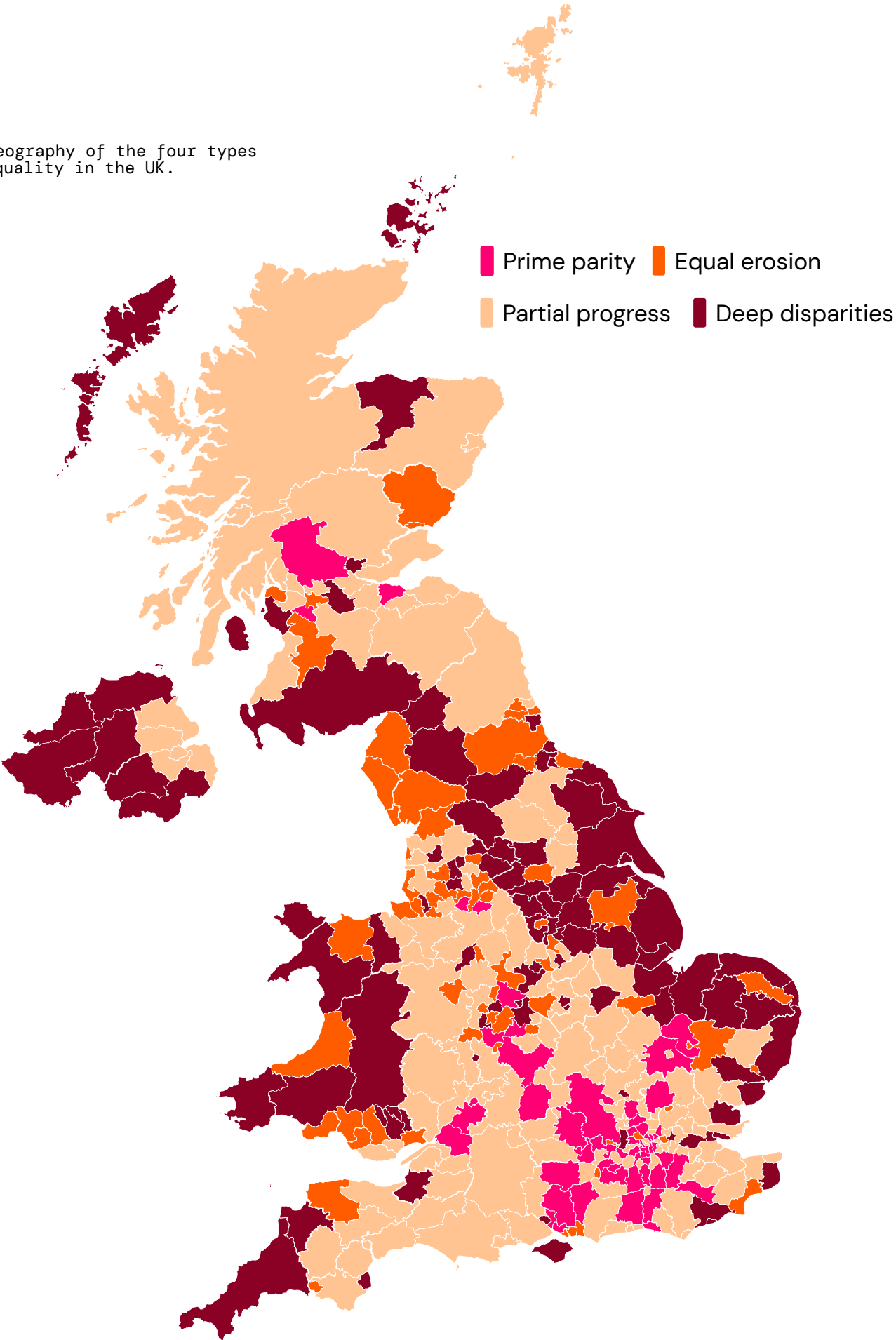
Deep disparities

The final type represents local authorities where both women and men fare poorly, while the gender gap remains significant. Concentrated in Northern Ireland (e.g. Derry City and Strabane), Wales (e.g. Merthyr Tydfil) and Yorkshire and the Humber (e.g. Bradford), these regions face the highest levels of deprivation, low economic activity of both genders and, in turn, low local productivity. In these areas, government intervention and investment are urgently needed to equitably raise the living standards of both women and men.

Table 3. Four types of gender equality in the UK and their characteristics.

Type of gender equality	Prime parity	Equal erosion	Partial progress	Deep disparities
Description	Highest gender equality and outcomes	High gender equality but poor outcomes	Moderate gender equality and outcomes	Low gender equality and poor outcomes
Example local authority	Guildford, St Albans, Wandsworth	Blackpool, Birmingham, Swansea	Canterbury, Midlothian, South Somerset	Bradford, Merthyr Tydfil, Derry City and Strabane
Top regional concentration	East of England, London, South East	North West, Wales, West Midlands	Scotland, South East, South West	Northern Ireland, Wales, Yorkshire and the Humber
Gender Equality Measure	High	High	Medium	Low
Women's Outcomes Measure	High	Low	Medium	Low
Men's Outcomes Measure	High	Low	Medium	Low
Productivity	High	Low	Medium	Low
Deprivation	Low	High	Medium	High

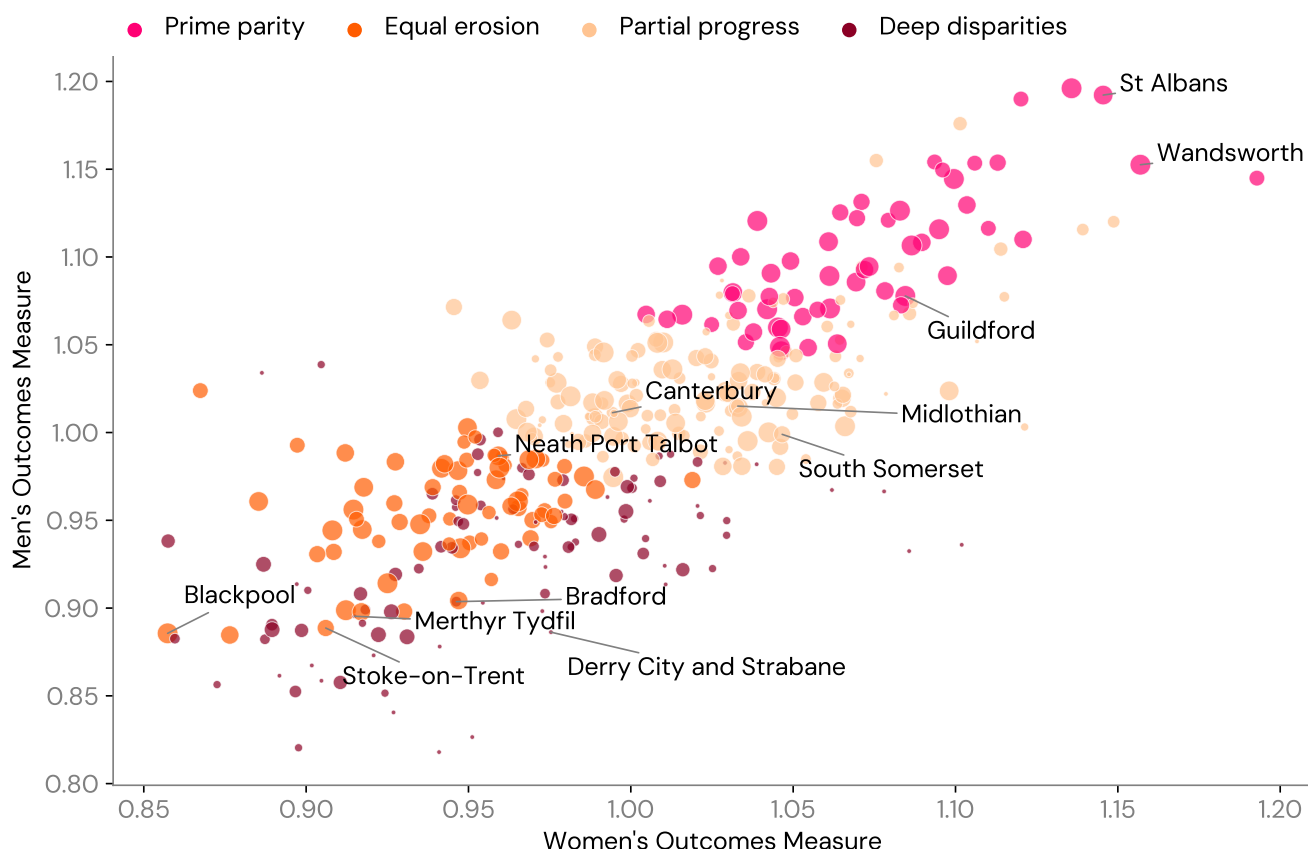
Figure 2. Geography of the four types of gender equality in the UK.



5.

These types show that **gender equality is not a zero-sum game: it flourishes where women and men do well.** Conversely, lower outcomes for women and men often coincide with lower gender equality. Importantly, no 'type of gender equality' combines high outcomes for both women and men with low gender equality levels. Figure 3 plots the Women's Outcomes Measure against the Men's Outcomes Measure to visualise this relationship.

Figure 3. Local authorities plotted according to their GEIUK scores and type of gender equality. Larger dots indicate higher scores on the Gender Equality Measure.



6.

The GEIUK provides evidence of a **positive association between gender equality and greater local productivity and economic activity,** highlighting the wider socioeconomic benefits of gender equality. Interestingly, it finds no linear relationship between gender equality and deprivation, as indicated by the four types of gender equality. Highlighting where gender and geographical inequalities exist and how they may limit growth offers early insights into untapped productivity potential across the UK. Moving forward, integrating gender equality into regional development strategies will be crucial to ensuring that economic gains are equitably distributed across the UK's diverse local areas.

7.

Gender inequalities are especially large in the domain of Unpaid Work (e.g. childcare and domestic tasks), where women show greater involvement, **and Power & Participation** (e.g. political voice, business leadership and civic engagement), where they are trailing behind men. In contrast, gender inequalities in the domains of Health, Money, Education and Paid Work tend to be narrower. This pattern reflects a 'stalled revolution': although women have made significant strides in education and the labour market, deeply rooted gender inequalities persist in care responsibilities and leadership roles.

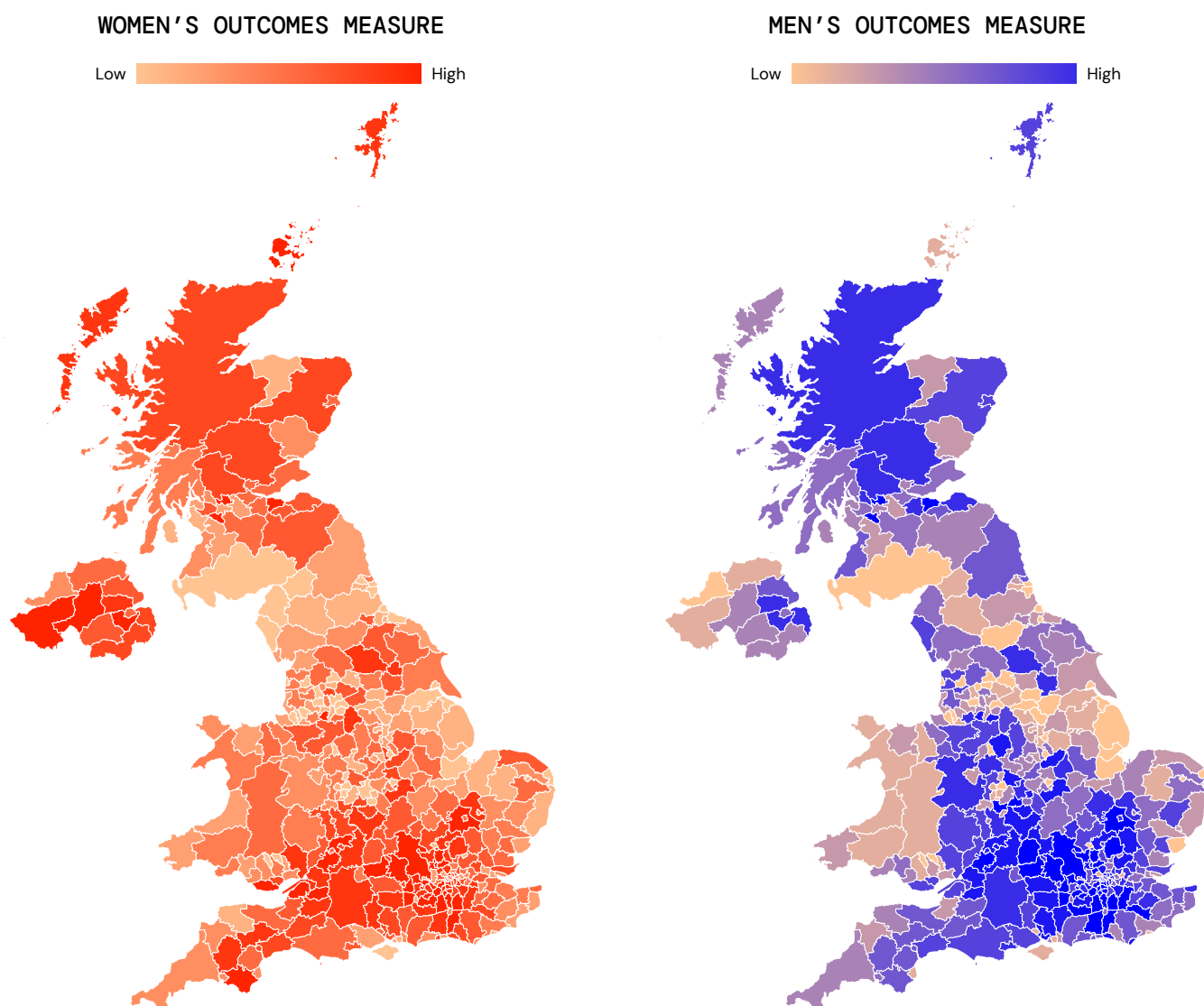
8.

In addition to its links with gender equality, we find that men's greater involvement in Unpaid Work is positively associated with higher socioeconomic outcomes for men. Within the framework of the GEIUK, this indicates that childcare and domestic work contribute to men's overall socioeconomic outcomes. In contrast, the association is negligible for women, suggesting that childcare and domestic work have little impact on women's socioeconomic status, though it does negatively affect gender equality. While these findings reveal meaningful patterns, they do not establish causality and should be understood as significant relationships that merit further investigation into the dynamics at play.

9.

Finally, the GEIUK provides evidence of a great divergence in outcomes that confirms the North-South divide. Women and men tend to exhibit above-average outcomes in the South of England, while those in the North of England and Wales more often fall behind. Patterns in Northern Ireland and Scotland are more mixed, with the gap between local and national outcomes often larger for men than for women. Further, men's higher outcomes are more geographically concentrated than women's outcomes, as illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Maps of local authority scores on Women's Outcomes Measure and Men's Outcomes Measure, with darker shades indicating higher outcomes.



Insights for policy and data collection

1.

ACCELERATE PROGRESS BY REDUCING GENDER INEQUALITIES IN THE DOMAINS OF UNPAID WORK AND POWER & PARTICIPATION

Greater efforts are needed to reduce gender inequalities in time spent on unpaid care and domestic work, and in leadership, engagement and voice. A more equal gender division of unpaid work can be supported by greater access to flexible working arrangements, better-paid shared parental and paternity leave and greater access to affordable childcare.

A more gender equal division of unpaid work can also positively impact women's ability to engage in political and community activities, although additional support structures must be put in place. For example, national and local government and political parties can support women's political representation at different levels by committing to a balanced selection of candidates for councillors, ensured by the collection and publication of

data on the diversity of candidates, as called for by the Fawcett Society and the Electoral Reform Society. Once in post, women councillors can be better supported by the introduction of parental leave and the provision of support for childcare and adult care costs.

Women also require better support to start and scale up businesses, which can stimulate employment growth, innovation and productivity. Greater efforts are needed to improve access to capital, care support and professional networks, as identified by the Rose Review (2019). Additionally, there is much scope to strengthen self-employment rights, for example, by bringing maternity pay, parental leave allowance, sick pay and pension contributions closer into line with those enjoyed by employees.

2.

GREATER INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDCARE AND DOMESTIC WORK BENEFITS MEN, SO WE MUST ENCOURAGE IT

Increasing men's involvement in childcare and domestic work requires extending the right to request and access flexible working arrangements but also the introduction of non-transferrable parental leave and extensions to paid paternity leave – to a minimum of six weeks in the UK as currently being advocated by organisations including the Fatherhood Institute, The Dad Shift and Pregnant Then Screwed.

Further, campaigns to challenge traditional gender norms and stereotypes and family-friendly workplace policies can encourage men's greater involvement in caregiving responsibilities. By removing logistical and cultural barriers, policymakers at both the national and local levels can encourage more egalitarian norms in unpaid work, ultimately benefiting individuals, families and broader communities alike.

3.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES WILL BENEFIT FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Reducing gender and regional inequalities can help stimulate economic growth. The GEIUK shows that local authorities with greater gender equality tend to exhibit higher economic activity, increased full-time employment and greater local productivity. Embedding gender-focused strategies into regional policies can foster more equitable and sustainable economic growth.

Labour markets are inherently gendered. A comprehensive gender analysis of both supply-side factors (such as health, education and caregiving responsibilities) and demand-side factors (including prevalent local sectors and workplace flexibility) can help identify untapped economic potential and areas for reform. This approach enables targeted investments in gender-inclusive initiatives and ensures that regional development strategies address contextual barriers.

The GEIUK provides a powerful framework for advancing these goals, offering a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics by examining differences both between and among women and men. These insights should guide the integration of gender equality objectives into national policies, including the government's mission to Kick-start the economy and the delivery of the Invest 2035 industrial strategy. The GEIUK can inform the design of evidence-based, context-specific interventions to unlock significant economic and social benefits while addressing persistent inequalities across the UK.

4.

ADDRESS STRUCTURAL BARRIERS ASSOCIATED WITH PART-TIME WORK FOR WOMEN

The GEIUK shows that women's part-time work is negatively associated with women's socioeconomic outcomes and gender equality. Cultural changes are needed to counter stigmas around part-time work that result in negative outcomes for workers' well-being and productivity.

Better access to flexible working arrangements – flexitime and remote working – can help women out of part-time employment. Similarly, increasing access to affordable and high-quality childcare and expanding the availability of free breakfast and after-school clubs can support parents, especially mothers, in maintaining greater labour market participation.

5.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE UK GENDER DATA LANDSCAPE WILL STRENGTHEN THE GEIUK

The development of the GEIUK offered insight into the quality of the UK gender data landscape, uncovering key gaps that require addressing to strengthen our understanding of gender and geographical inequalities. As the first iteration, the GEIUK sets a foundation and improvements to the UK's gender data landscape will in turn further strengthen its validity, application and potential for impact.

Greater efforts are required to further collect harmonised data across the four nations using consistent concepts and methodologies and sufficiently large sample sizes that permit granular analysis below the regional level. Adequately funding statistical agencies across the UK's four nations is a prerequisite to this.

Further, improvements to data on time spent on different forms of unpaid care, including child, grandchild and adult care, are needed. This calls for more frequent time-use surveys with larger sample sizes covering all four nations at the local level to monitor changes in the time spent on childcare, domestic work and leisure time. This could help advance the GEIUK's measurement of the domain of Unpaid Work.

Improvements to individual-level private wealth indicators, such as savings and pension wealth, at the local authority level and across the four nations, would provide an enhanced measure of gender wealth inequalities in the domain of Money.

Additionally, collecting more multivariate data beyond sex-disaggregated data for intersectional analysis across age, ethnicity and other protected characteristics can enable deeper insights into gender and social inequalities across the UK.

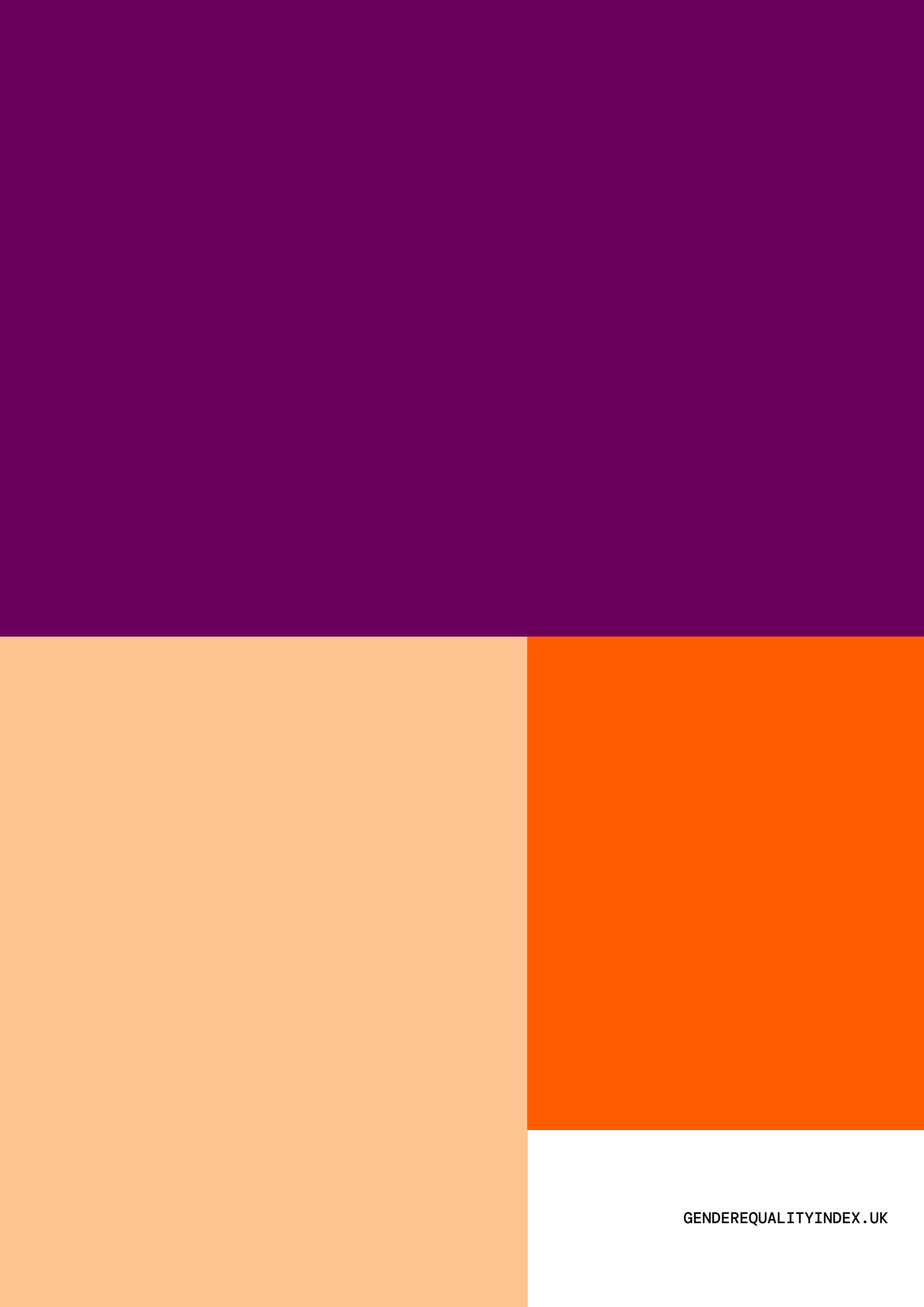
Finally, data on violence against women and girls should be improved in line with recommendations put forward in our previous report (Schmid et al., 2024). This would allow the inclusion of a domain of Violence in future iterations of the GEIUK to examine the relationship between varying levels of gender equality, women's and men's socioeconomic status and incidences of violence against women and girls.

Conclusion

The GEIUK is the first index to bring together comprehensive sex-disaggregated data and provide a granular picture of women's and men's socioeconomic outcomes across the UK's four nations. As the inaugural iteration, the GEIUK highlights gender and geographic inequalities at the local level and establishes a robust foundation for further research into the dynamics driving these disparities. Future iterations of the GEIUK would benefit from improvements to the gender data landscape, strengthening both its precision and its potential to drive meaningful change.

The GEIUK's findings are sobering and instructive. While no local authority has yet achieved full gender equality, those that come closest also demonstrate higher socioeconomic outcomes for all. These insights highlight a crucial opportunity to reduce gender disparities and advance inclusive regional development and shared prosperity.

More than a measurement tool, the GEIUK offers a roadmap to policymakers, advocates and communities. It pinpoints where inequalities are most pronounced, identifies pathways for progress and demonstrates how targeted interventions can lead to a more equitable distribution of social and economic benefits. By placing gender equality in the context of women's and men's overall outcomes, the GEIUK serves as a guide for building more resilient, inclusive and thriving local economies across the UK.





KING'S
BUSINESS
SCHOOL

KING'S GLOBAL
INSTITUTE
FOR WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP



KCL.AC.UK/GIWL



GIWL



GIWLKINGS.BSKY.SOCIAL



GIWLKINGS



GIWL@KCL.AC.UK

Gender
Equality
Index
UK