

Mapping policy
understandings of
gender & sexuality:
preliminary review.

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The Breaking Binaries Research (BBR) programme was founded by Katrina and Helen to explore complex and diverse identities at work. We spend most of our lives in work and are shaped by the workplaces and types of work we engage with. Therefore, we believe work and workplaces have a significant role in wider equity and equality agendas and demand a greater level of focus. Our research programme challenges problematic categorical understandings of difference in the context of work. We are interested in exploring the multifaceted ways in which identities are understood, assumed and constructed. Research has yet to take account of how diverse identities are not simply categorical but complex and intersectional, as individuals self-identify beyond, between or across identity binaries. Our programme of research projects seeks to address and progress current conversations of diversity at work.

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Introduction

As part of the wider Breaking Binaries Research (BBR) programme, in this project we aim to map understandings of gender and sexuality diversity across various government policy documents within the UK. We focus on the implications of these understandings for entrepreneurs and small businesses in relation to how diversity is constructed by policy makers. Policy documents provide a visual and written summary with varying focus ranging from statements, directives, advisories and guidance, plans and reviews. Such policies represent a political ideological articulation of how prevailing values intersect with understandings of diverse identities (Ahl & Marlow, 2021). We define gender and sexuality diversity as including all those who self-identify as not conforming to binary identities and/or bodies, and those who identify in various, and sometimes multiple, ways as part of LGBTQIA+ communities. Policy makers labelling of these identities, especially the use of pre-given categories, is problematic (Guyan, 2022) but little is known about the use of different terms and associated understandings. Our initial focus is therefore a mapping exercise to explore both visual and textual data to shed light on policy understandings of these aspects of diversity.

Diversity is often conceived in terms of categories: assigned, fixed and measurable socio-demographic traits used to characterise entrepreneurs that do not fit traditional stereotypes. This locates the causes of inequality, and its remedies, within individuals and interpersonal relations. Entrepreneurship scholarship highlights how minority social identities – encompassing race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, ability, and sexuality – are potential repositories of economic value and mechanisms for social change (Ettl et al., 2021). This assumes engaging in entrepreneurship emancipates diverse individuals from wider structural forms of discrimination, even if this does not address broader causes of disadvantage (Williams et al., 2021). Moreover, research demonstrates that those perceived as differing from the stereotypical heroic, youthful, energetic, masculine entrepreneur are likely to experience difficulty in growing a successful enterprise (Marlow, 2020). Therefore, while support initiatives encourage entrepreneurship and enterprise growth as a means of addressing inequality, they may also have unintended consequences, even creating barriers to access (Ozkazanc-Pan, 2021).

This preliminary report provides early insights from our ongoing analytic work:

- Topographical overview: Descriptive data
- Charting content: Quantitative content analysis
- Thematic contours: Initial observations
- Visual Plots: Image compositional analysis

Subsequent analytic work will follow, including a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021) approach for textual data and a combined visual analysis (Pritchard, 2020) for policy imagery. This detailed analysis will be reported at a later date along with findings from our related primary data collection and analysis.

Scope and Research Method

We adopted a broad sweep approach to policy identification and collection, reflecting that our aim was to produce a map of both visual and written understandings of gender and sexuality (Williams et al., 2023). In light of the devolution of relevant policy areas, after an initial scoping search we focused on policy categorised as: 1) UK-wide and/or English, 2) Welsh, and 3) Scottish. We noted that the first category was not always clear in relation to the geographic relevance, and this has been retained as a composite category. At the time of the research project, due to the ongoing suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly, NI policy was excluded. A total of 59 policy documents were collected, totalling 3099 pages and included: 18 UK/English policies, 11 Welsh policies, and 30 Scottish policies published between 2018 and 2022.

As our aim was to map current understandings, and conscious of the likely disruption to policy publication during the pandemic, we selected a five-year timeframe from 2018-2022 inclusive. To gather the policy documents, the respective government's online depositories of policy documents were searched for the following or similar categories: Arts, Culture & Sport; Business, Innovation & Digital; Community & Regeneration; Jobs & Employment; Political, Economic & Post-Covid; Gender. This list reflects that discussions of both gender and sexuality diversity and entrepreneurship/small business are cross-cutting themes that often appear across a wide-range of policy discussions. Given our focus we deliberately excluded family, social, and health policy from this search. The categorisation was based on the initial search of Welsh policy and reflected in part the organisation of the Welsh Government website. However, it provided a useful means of structuring the policy search. However, where gaps were identified alternate/variant search terms were trialled using a search engine to ensure the policy dataset was sufficiently populated. All policy documents were downloaded as PDF documents.

We undertook separate but related analytic processes for reviewing text and images. The first stage of textual analysis was a content-analysis to provide an initial map of the policy dataset. All documents were searched (using the PDF search function) for the following terms: Diversity; Equality; Ethnicity; BAME/BME; Gender; Women; Sexuality, LGBT; Transgender; Non-binary, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual. The terms diversity and equality were used as a base for identifying discussion that was related to these generic terms. We anticipated that this would provide an indication of how these topics were framed in these data. The terms Ethnicity and BAME were included as we were interested in mapping any potential points of connection to our focus on gender and sexuality diversity; with the expectation that a fuller intersectional analysis might then proceed as a separate but related project. As our focus was on entrepreneurship and small business, we wanted to identify any reference to these terms within the gender-related policy documents. Therefore, these data were additionally searched for the following 4 terms: Entrepreneurship; Business; Economy; Disadvantage. Appendix 1 highlights the variants of search-terms used. These terms were identified after a review of the first set of searches and then applied to all data. All search returns were checked

for relevance and unrelated returns were excluded (e.g., biodiversity). Separation between gender and transgender was manually reviewed to ensure that these data were not conflated during subsequent analytic steps. From this search process, a quantitative map was produced (see Sections 3 and 4). As a result of this analytic work, we will conduct additional rounds of content analysis to allow us to explore further avenues of enquiry.

With each search hit identified during this process, an extended extract was also recorded, and the text separately downloaded and catalogued. These extracts will be subject to a process of qualitative thematic analysis during the next stage of our project. However, observations made during our initial analytic stages these data are provided here (see Section 5).

The image search began with a process of clipping all images from the PDF versions of the policy document so that a database of images by policy was produced. For the purposes of this analysis, all images were reviewed with the decision made to exclude repeats and presentations of text and quotes in summary boxes that were graphic-like in layout but not containing any unique or specific graphics. We found that quote boxes (using a quote icon) were a particular feature of policy documents; while a separate analysis of overall document structure and presentation will be considered in future analytic steps. Within this review we report the initial stage of Combined Visual Analysis (CVA, Pritchard 2020), a compositional category analysis of those images collected from gender-related policy only (see Section 6). A full CVA analysis of all images collected is ongoing at this time.



Topographical Overview: Descriptive Data

The policy dataset comprises a total of 59 policies from across UK/England, Wales and Scotland which together amount to 3099 pages of policy documentation as shown in Table 1 below. The longest policy document totalled 230 pages and the shortest was a single page with the average length being 53 pages.

Table 1: Policy dataset by category and country

Category	UK/England	Wales	Scotland
Art, Culture & Sport	2	0	4
Business, innovation & Digital	3	3	11
Communities & Regeneration	5	2	4
Jobs & Employment	3	2	3
Political, economic & post-covid	2	3	3
Gender	3	1	5
Total policy documents (pages)	18 (1004)	11 (364)	30 (1731)

As with any typology, this categorisation only offers a general view of the policy focus since there is much cross-reference and interconnectivity between policy documents. Nevertheless, we note that there is a relatively even spread of policies across these types, with the exception of the number of Scottish Business, Innovation and Digital, and Gender related policies. When combined, these contribute to a marked difference in policy count between Scotland in comparison with Wales and UK/England.

In addition to variation by policy type, length, and count we also noted differences in publication date within our five-year timeframe, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

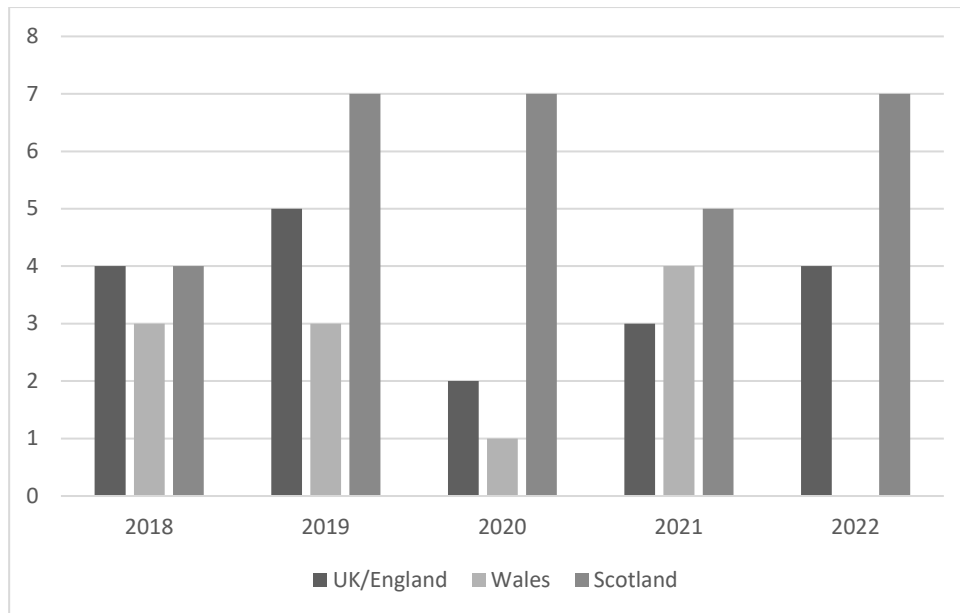


Figure 1: Number of policy documents per year

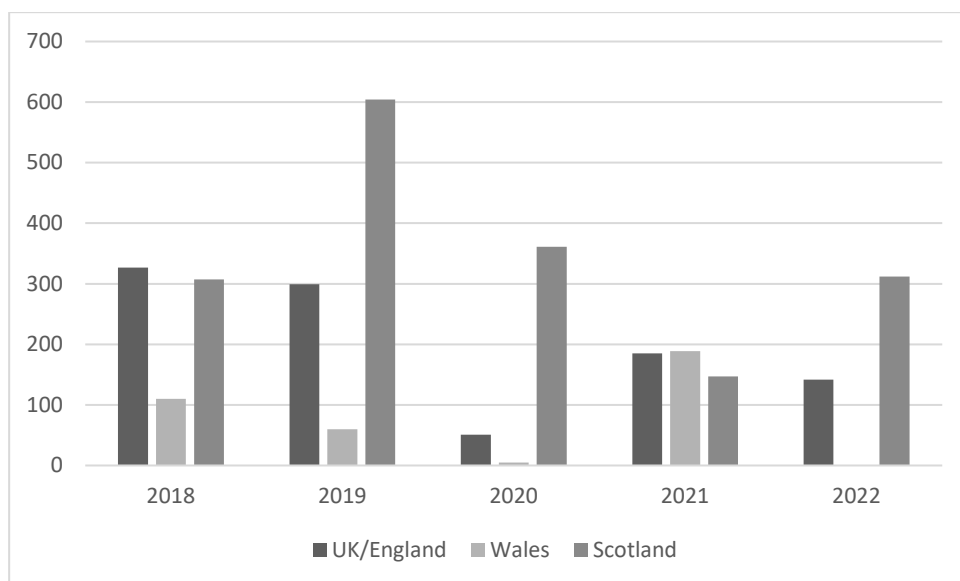


Figure 2: Number of pages per policy document per year

In reviewing the spread of policies across the five-year period we report both number of policy documents and page length (Figures 1 and 2). We note that in relation to the number of policies within our dataset, Scotland appears most prolific although this is moderated somewhat (with the exception of 2019) when the number of pages is taken into account.

Overall, while there was a small drop off in policy publication during the Covid-19 pandemic in UK/England and Wales, there seemed to be a delayed impact in relation to Scottish policy, which experienced a relative slowdown in 2021. Of course, policy publication dates represent the point at which a particular policy is made public, whilst policy making is an ongoing

process. We also note that different political priorities across the five-years will be reflected in these timescales, including the official date of Brexit (31/1/2020) and various local, regional and party leadership elections. To this end we are cautious about making specific claims in relation to these schedules but note these contextual markers as we move forward with our analysis. In addition, the five-year cut-off excludes the recent Welsh LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales, published in February 2023. We are continuing to collect relevant policy to incorporate subsequent years at a later date. However, for practical reasons we have abided by the five-year timeframe within this preliminary report.

Charting Content: Quantitative Content Analysis

Following the methodology described previously and allowing for inclusion of the alternate search term provided in Appendix A, an overall summary of the quantitative content analysis is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Content Analysis Overall Summary

Search Term	UK/England	Wales	Scotland	Totals
Diversity	91	12	145	248
Equality	66	79	1075	1220
Ethnicity	11	6	90	107
BAME	10	10	43	63
Gender	128	111	1133	1372
Women	169	223	1477	1869
Sexuality	0	1	5	6
LGBT	5	4	59	68
Transgender	0	0	22	22
Non-binary	0	3	5	8
Gay	0	3	3	6
Lesbian	1	1	2	4
Bisexual	0	1	3	4

Firstly, we note that while diversity and equality appear widely across these policies, there is a notable shift in the comparative use of these terms within countries. It appears that discussions of diversity prevail in UK/English policy documentation in comparison to equality (91 vs 66). However, within Welsh and particularly Scottish policy documents, the usage is reversed with the term equality more common. Although requiring exploration in more detail via thematic analysis, initial observations suggest a tonal difference between recognising

diversity versus aiming to achieve equality, with the latter generally being regarded as more action oriented. A query for inclusion was carried out but ultimately omitted from our analysis, as this was used to refer primarily to digital inclusion across these policies. The term equity was also searched, but referred to many different forms of access equity and will require further research before reporting any findings. At this stage we simply note that equity seems to reflect a similar pattern to equality within policy consideration, including receiving more direct attention in Scottish policy.

We included BAME and ethnicity in our search terms as an interesting comparator and to facilitate further intersectional analysis. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that even numerically this is much less discussed than issues related to gender and women. We return to this below. In relation to the mentions of the LGBT acronym, as outlined in Appendix A, this appeared in many different short and long forms. While the use was consistent within individual policy, there did not seem to be a particular pattern of use according to country or policy type. Given the wide-ranging discussion about terminology and that the use of various acronyms might be exclusionary, this was something of a surprise. Further analysis of any trends over time would be a useful consideration. However, usage of the acronym far outweighed use of the composite terms, and it is interesting to note that the term sexuality was very infrequently mentioned. Further analysis is needed to unpack the implicit ways in which the (various forms of) the LGBT acronym is used to infer diverse genders and sexualities. With the exception of Scottish policy, the term transgender does not appear at all, and other elements of the LGBT acronym are used only very occasionally. This suggests that these diverse communities are often regarded as homogenous, although given there is so little discussion it is this lack of attention that is of primary note in our analysis. In addition to the search results presented in Tables 2 and 3, we conducted a follow up search for the term Queer, but this was only identified once in one Scottish policy document.

As noted, gender features extensively across all policy areas but is obviously extensively used in this area of policy, see Table 3 below.

Table 3: Content Analysis for Gender Policy Category

Search Term	UK/England	Wales	Scotland	Totals
Diversity	12	4	31	47
Equality	48	9	413	470
Ethnicity	1	1	2	4
BAME	0	2	4	6
Gender	115	63	912	1090
Women	123	153	915	1191
Sexuality	0	0	2	2
LGBT	3	0	22	25
Transgender	0	0	1	1
Non-binary	0	0	0	0
Gay	0	0	0	0
Lesbian	1	0	0	1
Bisexual	0	0	0	0

While above we noted the use of the term diversity over equality in UK/English policy, within the Gender policy category we found that equality is used more widely than the term diversity across all three governments. Furthermore, we highlight the relative lack of discussion of ethnicity or BAME within this category. While an absence of these terms is not itself proof, this might suggest that discussions of gender are seen as separate to those of ethnicity such that an intersectional perspective is not yet embedded within these policy documents.

Across this data-subset the generic use of the terms gender and women are roughly equivalent. Table 3 demonstrates the substantially higher count of these two terms compared to other search terms. We suggest this reflects that discussions of gender within these policy documents is by and large a discussion of women, which tend to be used in a way that infers cisgendered norms. Beyond Scottish policy documents there are only three mentions of LGBT, one of lesbian and none of transgender, bisexual, or non-binary identities. While the term LGBT receives attention within Scottish policy documents in the gender category, there is a solitary mention of transgender identities. It seems reasonable to suggest that there is a lack of consideration of gender-nonconforming identities within policies that on the surface appear to be concerned with gender. The term sexuality appears only twice across all these policy documents, suggesting that the complex intersections between gender identities and sexualities is given scant consideration.

We also note that, given the overall frequency of use (variants of LGBT appear 68 times in our dataset and 25 times in our gender category) that it will be important to consider the broader discussions of LGBT and related terms beyond gender policy within our thematic analysis. From a content analytic perspective, the following breakdown offers an overview of where specific discussions of terms within the LGBT community appear in other policy categories (See also Appendix 2 for a full breakdown by category).

Table 4: LGBT and related identities across policy categories other than gender

Policy Area	Term	UK/England	Wales	Scotland	Total
Arts, Culture & Sport	LGBT	0	n/a	3	3
	Transgender	0	n/a	5	5
	Non-binary	0	n/a	0	0
	Gay	0	n/a	1	1
	Lesbian	0	n/a	1	1
	Bisexual	0	n/a	1	1
Business, innovation & Digital	LGBT	0	0	7	7
	Transgender	0	0	3	3
	Non-binary	0	0	1	1
	Gay	0	0	0	0
	Lesbian	0	0	0	0
	Bisexual	0	0	0	0
Communities & Regeneration	LGBT	2	0	9	11
	Transgender	0	0	11	11
	Non-binary	0	0	1	1
	Gay	0	0	0	0
	Lesbian	0	0	0	0
	Bisexual	0	0	0	0
Jobs & Employment	LGBT	0	0	0	0
	Transgender	0	0	0	0
	Non-binary	0	0	0	0
	Gay	0	1	0	1
	Lesbian	0	1	0	1
	Bisexual	0	1	0	1
Political, economic & post-covid	LGBT	0	4	18	22
	Transgender	0	0	2	2
	Non-binary	0	3	3	6
	Gay	0	2	2	4
	Lesbian	0	0	1	1
	Bisexual	0	0	1	1

While Table 4 shows that across Scottish policy documents there appears to be a reasonable spread of use of these terms, there is an exception in relation to Jobs and Employment policy. Across the other geographic classifications while these terms feature occasionally, they are notable by their absence. Further consideration of the extracts in which these terms appear will be undertaken in our thematic analysis.

Returning to our category of gender policy, a further content analysis was undertaken to see if there was coverage of topics in relation to entrepreneurship and small business, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Business focus within gender policy category

Policy Focus	UK/England	Wales	Scotland	Totals
Entrepreneurship	0	13	4	17
Business	21	143	83	247
Economy	11	3	41	55
Disadvantage	10	0	13	23
TOTAL	42	159	141	342

This analysis highlights Welsh gender policy (and noting this is a single policy) as having a particular focus on business, although interestingly this is the only area with no mention of any disadvantage. Again, the contextual use of these terms and their relation to the various gender terms summarised in Table 4 will be the topic of further thematic analysis within the next stage of our research.



Thematic Contours: Initial Observations

The initial observations discussed here arise from the first reading carried out via the process of data organization and will be supplemented by a full thematic analytic review in the next stage of the project. These include points of interest in relation to the content analysis above and the image analysis that follows below.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, we note a similar style of policy writing across all documents with much, often relatively vague, discussion of aims and ambitions usually accompanied by confirmation of previous achievement in relation to the future goals or areas of focus. However there seems to be a lack of specific details or measures against which progress might be assessed. In relation to the gender policy documentation, we noticed significant discussion of 'potential' and of the need to address 'gaps', particularly regarding pay and sector balances, the latter with discussion of STEM as an area of concern. Increasing the rates of women entrepreneurs was a topic that featured across both Welsh and Scottish policy documentation as a potential solution to pre-existing gaps. We found topics of care and the menopause receiving some attention in relation to the challenges faced by women.

Historically, data is captured for the categories of men and women, such data reinforces the focus on assumed gender binaries. In this regard there was much discussion of the future need for collaborative policy making that drew on a wider range of stakeholders. We observed in this initial reading that where there is attention to LGBT, transgender, or non-binary individuals, for example when considered as a specialist focus, there is some recognition of the need to address this previously under researched issue. Within Scottish policy, there is much reference to forthcoming Gender Recognition legislation, at the time of writing this is

subject to much debate and concern following the leadership change within the Scottish National Party and the legislative process for devolved policy.

Visual Plots: Image Compositional Analysis

In this section we present our initial review of the images within the gender policy category, using a compositional category analysis, the first stage of the Combined Visual Analysis method (CVA, Pritchard 2020). This provides a compositional summary of image types.

Table 6: Image Compositional Summary

Composition	UK/England	Wales	Scotland	Totals
Graphic/Infographic	1	0	13	14
Solo Women	2	4	7	11
Group (Women/Mixed)	8	4	8	20
a. Caring/family	5 of 8	1 of 4	1 of 8	7 of 20
b. other	3 of 8	3 of 4	7 of 8	13 of 20
Product		1		1
Hands (groups)	0	0	4	4
Place/Building	0	0	1	1
Man with a child	1	0	1	2
TOTAL	12	9	34	

While it is not advisable to ‘read’ gender within image representation (Pritchard et al., 2022), across these policy documents there were no apparent images of gender or sexuality diversity. Moreover, even the icons used in graphics were often explicitly gendered, for example in a Scottish policy document an icon was used in which the man had short hair and a tie, and a long-haired woman (see Figure 1)



Figure 3: Icon in Scottish Gender Policy reports

We also note the divergent representation of groups across these policies. Within the UK/English policies group images most often showed a woman in a caring role for children or elderly adults; while we note that there was also one image of a man with a child. Nevertheless, this depiction of care appeared much less frequently in Welsh and Scottish documents. Here depictions of care generally rely on close physical proximity or touch.

Additionally, the notion of touch and proximity also appear in Scottish documents through images of hands, shown in close up (without seeing the rest of the person) and always connected in some form of 'holding'. In other 'group' images, most depicted a workplace with some that could be read as relating to training. These included an image repeated in two different Scottish policy documents of a mixed group around a table with a woman pointing at a blank flipchart. While there are no image credits provided, a search shows this to be a commercial stock image. Further review of the use of commercial imagery across these reports will be undertaken in the next stage of analysis.



Summary

In this report we mapped understandings of gender and sexuality diversity across various government policy documents within the UK. Our analysis identified limited - in some cases no - representation of diverse gender(s) and sexualities across UK and devolved nation's policies. While the terms 'gender' and 'women' were common across most policy documents, these tended to be used in a way which inferred cisgendered norms. We found this to be especially evident in policy focused specifically on gender. Here there was no mention of genders beyond binary male(men)/female(women) understandings; these binaries were further found to be reinforced in our provisional visual and thematic findings. From our analysis we conclude that there is limited consideration of gender non-conforming identities and/or bodies. Similarly, sexuality and associated terms were evident in their absence across all policies examined.

We found ambiguities in how the LGBT initialism was used across all policy data. There were very few examples of each initial being discussed or treated as separate communities. Except for some Scottish policies, the term transgender did not appear at all, and other elements of the LGBT acronym are used only very occasionally. This suggests that these diverse communities are often regarded as homogenous and share similar challenges. We found comparable usage of Black, Asian, Minorities and Ethnicities (BAME) terminology, with no intersectional applications identified.

In summary, we note three key findings:

1. A notable absence of diverse genders and sexualities terminology across policies.
2. The use of homogenous initialisms (LGBT and variants) with limited discussion of individual communities.
3. Limited discussion of intersectionality or intersectional application of terms.

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Appendix 1: Content Analysis Search Term Variants

Diversity – no alternates

Equality – Inequality, Equality-focussed

Ethnicity – no alternates

BAME – BME

Gender – genders, -equal, -based,-sensitive, -competent, -blind, -aware, -specific, -disaggregated,- focused, -neutral.

Women – women's, -led, -only, -sensitive, -owned, businesswomen

LGBT – LGBTQ, LGBTI, LGBT+, LGBTQ+, LGBTQIA+, -inclusive

Transgender – no alternates

Non-binary – no alternates

Entrepreneurship – no alternates

Business – businesses, -led

Economy - no alternates

Disadvantage – no alternates

Appendix 2: Content analysis by policy category

Content analysis of Gender category

	UK/England	Wales	Scotland	Totals
Diversity	12	4	31	47
Equality	48	9	413	470
Ethnicity	1	1	2	4
BAME or similar	0	2	4	6
Gender	115	63	912	1090
Women	123	153	915	1191
Sexuality	0	0	2	2
LGBT or similar	3	0	22	25
Transgender	0	0	1	1
Non-binary	0	0	0	0
Gay	0	0	0	0
Lesbian	1	0	0	1
Bisexual	0	0	0	0

Content analysis of Arts, Culture & Sport

	UK/England	Wales	Scotland	Totals
Diversity	37	N/A	14	51
Equality	1	N/A	104	105
Ethnicity	2	N/A	12	14
BAME or similar	5	N/A	0	5
Gender	4	N/A	58	62
Women	12	N/A	94	106
Sexuality	0	N/A	1	1
LGBT or similar	0	N/A	3	3
Transgender	0	N/A	5	5
Non-binary	0	N/A	0	0
Gay	0	N/A	1	1
Lesbian	0	N/A	1	1
Bisexual	0	N/A	1	1

Content analysis of Business, Innovation & Digital

	UK/England	Wales	Scotland	Totals
Diversity	15	0	36	51
Equality	4	8	156	168
Ethnicity	3	1	5	9
BAME or similar	1	0	0	1
Gender	1	3	66	70
Women	10	2	130	142
Sexuality	0	0	0	0
LGBT or similar	0	0	7	7
Transgender	0	0	3	3
Non-binary	0	0	1	1
Gay	0	0	0	0
Lesbian	0	0	0	0
Bisexual	0	0	0	0

Content analysis of Communities & Regeneration

	UK/England	Wales	Scotland	Totals
Diversity	24	0	12	36
Equality	12	0	70	82
Ethnicity	5	0	4	9
BAME or similar	1	0	0	1
Gender	7	0	5	12
Women	20	0	3	23
Sexuality	0	0	2	2
LGBT or similar	2	0	9	11
Transgender	0	0	11	11
Non-binary	0	0	1	1
Gay	0	0	0	0
Lesbian	0	0	0	0
Bisexual	0	0	0	0

Content analysis of Jobs & Employment

	UK/England	Wales	Scotland	Totals
Diversity	1	2	44	47
Equality	1	10	215	226
Ethnicity	0	1	52	53
BAME or similar	0	2	6	8
Gender	0	8	66	74
Women	3	11	92	106
Sexuality	0	0	0	0
LGBT or similar	0	0	0	0
Transgender	0	0	0	0
Non-binary	0	0	0	0
Gay	0	1	0	1
Lesbian	0	1	0	1
Bisexual	0	1	0	1

Content analysis of Political, Economic & Post-Covid

	UK/England	Wales	Scotland	Totals
Diversity	2	6	8	16
Equality	0	52	117	169
Ethnicity	0	3	15	18
BAME or similar	3	6	33	42
Gender	1	37	26	64
Women	1	57	243	301
Sexuality	0	1	0	1
LGBT or similar	0	4	18	22
Transgender	0	0	2	2
Non-binary	0	3	3	6
Gay	0	2	2	4
Lesbian	0	0	1	1
Bisexual	0	0	1	1