

Local geographic variations found in children's school readiness in England

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Research by Dr. K. Purdam and colleagues from Social Statistics has highlighted the substantial differences in school readiness at the individual, school and local area levels in England. The work is

[published](#) in the journal *Child Indicators Research*.

While increasing the levels of school readiness is a key target in the UK government's Leveling Up policy, tackling the stark inequalities will take considerable investment and highly targeted support across the home and school learning environments.

The educational attainment levels of children in state-funded schools in England are lower than in many countries with comparable levels of economic development. There are also striking differences at the local level across England. To understand these differences it is important to examine children's development in their early years.

A new study uses multilevel analysis of the National Pupil Database to investigate [child development](#) at ages 4 and 5 years old at the individual, school and local levels including within a [case study urban area](#).

Child development is assessed using teachers' observations to measure what is termed school readiness. This is based on a child's communication, literacy and numeracy skills and their physical, personal and [social development](#).

The findings reveal substantial differences in school readiness at the individual, school and local area levels including in terms of sex, [ethnic background](#), age in the school year, welfare benefit entitlement and local area income deprivation level. Such differences are also evident across the separate Early Learning Goals that are used to assess school readiness.

Between local areas children with similar backgrounds can vary considerably in their likelihood of being categorized as school ready. Many children face multiple disadvantages as a consequence of different interlinked factors including where they live. The gap in the levels of

school readiness has long-term implications for the individuals themselves and for society more widely.

While increasing the levels of [school readiness](#) is a key target in the UK government's Leveling Up policy, tackling the stark inequalities will take considerable investment, highly targeted support and engagement across the home and school learning environments.

More information: K. Purdam et al, Local Geographic Variations in Children's School Readiness—A Multilevel Analysis of the Development Gaps in England, *Child Indicators Research* (2023). [DOI: 10.1007/s12187-023-10081-7](#)

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