

“I’ve never spoken to anybody about these things, it’s made me think”: Promoting Gender equitable Interactions in Online Work Meetings

At the heart of the Gender Equitable Interactions Online (GEiO) project is the idea that everyone deserves a voice in online work meetings. Our aim is to explore how digital videoconferencing can maintain or be used to resist gender inequity at work. To address this aim, the GEiO project has investigated the role of gender in online work meetings across four nations (Germany, Iceland, Spain and the UK). Our investigation has involved analysing conversational interactions, mapping shared understandings and social perceptions related to online work meetings to identify both barriers to equal participation and practices that support gender equity in businesses and organisations. While gender has been a central focus, the project has also considered how other forms of inequity - such as those related to race, neurodivergence, and other intersecting identities - can shape experiences of online working.

In our project we brought together professionals from different industries in specially designed forums to spark positive change and promote fair, safe, and equal participation in online work. These forums created a space for participants to engage with our research findings, reflect on their own experiences, and explore practical ways to make online meetings equitable for those involved. Forum participants told us that these discussions were valuable for driving real change, helping them to:

- *develop a greater awareness of how online meetings affect people differently, especially in relation to how men listened and responded to women*
- *gain a better understanding of how best to lead and run online meetings that support rather than silence contributions*
- *build confidence and skills to challenge behaviour that may disadvantage women in online meetings*

We have captured this momentum for change in the main outcome of our project: the launch of a free accessible online course, hosted by the Open University. The course is designed for anyone who participates in or creates policy on online meetings at work. It draws directly on the project's international findings to provide learners with evidence-based recommendations and ideas for good practice. Our course uses real world scenarios and reflective tools to help users create more equitable digital environments at work.

The course offers practical evidence-based guidance on a range of topics including:

- *how to effectively participate in online meetings*
- *how to lead and chair meetings that give everyone a voice*
- *using humour to build – not break – team cohesion*
- *recognising when a meeting is worth everyone's time.*



Our course is a powerful tool for HR teams, organisational learning leads, policymakers, and anyone who wants to make online work meetings fair, safe and equitable.