# Driver: Men’s control of decision-making, ableist control of decision-making, and limits to the independence of women with disabilities in public and private life

## Examples of this include:

* Coercive decision-making around parenting, including making decision for women with disabilities, not providing appropriate and accessible parenting support, and high rates of child removal
* Coercive reproductive practices, including forcing or pressuring women with disabilities to undergo sterilisation, use birth control of have a termination
* Discrimination in employment and under-represented in decision-making roles in society, such as high-paying work, leadership roles and in politics
* Lack of Respectful Relationships Education for people with disabilities
* Inaccessible transport, buildings, education, services, workplaces and spaces
* Men’s control in relationships is often normalised in pop culture, in family relationships, in peer groups and workplaces
* Family members or carers making decisions about care or living arrangement without consulting
* Family members of carers controlling how money is spent

## These inequalities increase the likelihood of women with disabilities being targeted for violence in society. This is because they:

* Send a message that women with disabilities are less worthy of respect and are therefore perceived as more legitimate targets for violence​
* Make women with disabilities more economically, socially and physically dependent on men and on able-bodied people and institutions – this can lead to someone thinking that they can perpetrate violence against women with disabilities without consequence​
* Undermine women with disabilities’ participation in the public sphere, particularly in formal decision-making and civic action.  This has a compounding impact because women with disabilities in positions of power are more likely than men and able-bodied people to make policy decisions to secure freedom from violence for women with disabilities.​
* Make it difficult for those who do experience violence to be able to leave​

While some of these behaviours may start off well-intentioned and may reflect a family member’s or carer’s desire to protect a woman with disability, over time they can move into control and abuse.

# Action: Promote women with disabilities’ independence and decision-making in public and private life

## Examples of this in private life include:

* Support women with disabilities to make decisions and have choice about their care
* Support women to take considered risks and set their own boundaries
* Acknowledge and support women with disabilities’ parenting skills
* Provide women with disabilities opportunities to learn about and manage their own money
* Support women with disaiblities to make their own decisions about who they want to spend time with and have relationships with

## Examples of this in public life include:

* Make streets, building, cafes, entertainment venues, schools, universities and workplaces accessible for all
* Make public transport accessible
* Make Respectful Relationships Education available and accessible to people with disabilities
* Support women with disabilities to develop leadership skills and to move into decision-making roles
* Undertake workplace unconscious bias training to reduce employment and workplace discrimination
* Record and analyse organisational statistics on gender and disability and develop actions to address inequalities
* Ensure the NDIS and disability planning increases independence over finance, care, transport, communication and encourages women’s decision-making
* Make sexual and reproductive health services accessible for women with disabilities. Support choice and resist coercive practices.

# Sources:

This content has been adapted from Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence against Women and their Children in Australia. Our Watch (2015).