

RESISTANCE & BACKLASH TO GENDER & DISABILITY INCLUSIVE PRACTICE



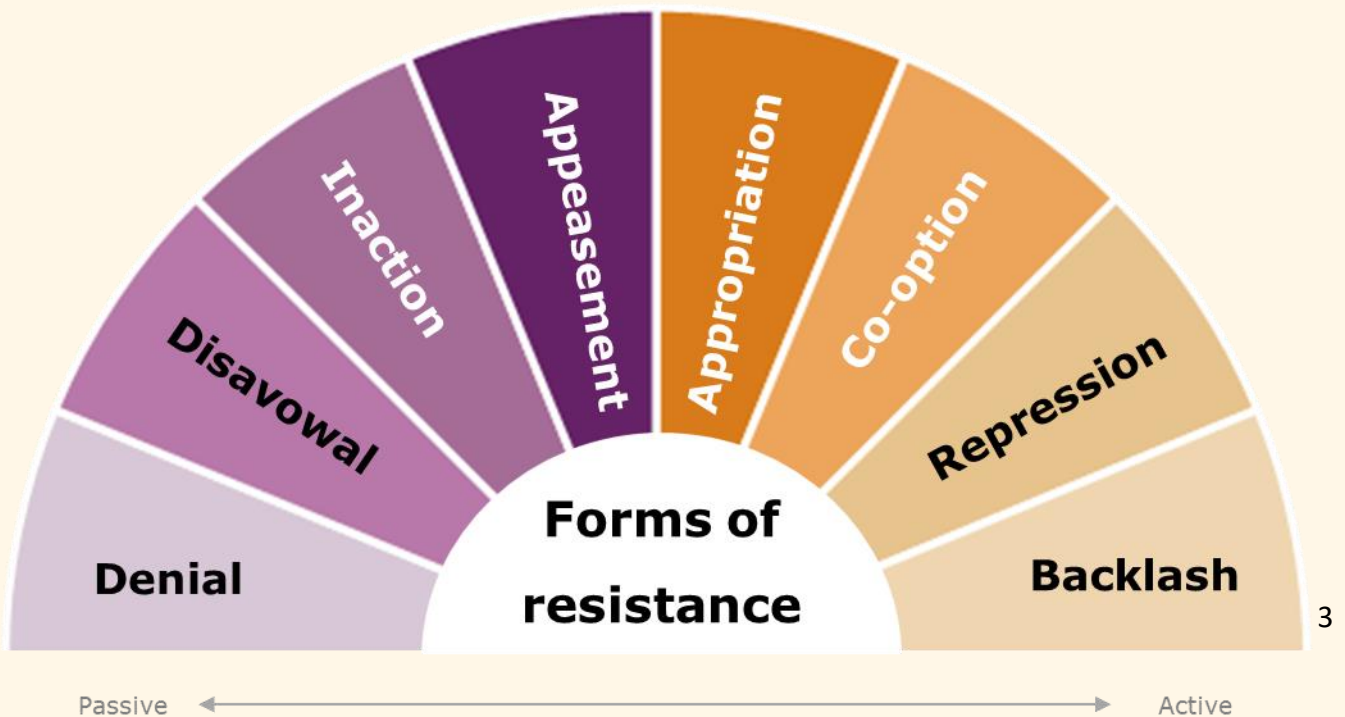
A tool for knowing how to identify, respond to, and support the prevention of resistance and backlash in the workplace.

What is Backlash and Resistance?

These are terms commonly used to describe responses to social action and change. When we progress towards more disability and gender inclusive workplaces, communities and society, backlash and resistance can appear in a variety of ways that show ingrained beliefs, structures, or patterns that support ableism and gender inequality. When we begin to experience progress, direct and indirect forms of backlash and resistance can become more common and create harm against women with disabilities. Anticipating the potential for backlash and resistance means that how we work to prevent violence against women with disabilities can be more sustainable and include more people to take on this work.

How to Use this Resource

The following tool describes a 'spectrum' of backlash and resistance to help identify how it often can take place in the workplace when preventing violence against women with disabilities. This resource has been designed for anyone who is practicing actions to prevent, challenge, or stop violence against women with disabilities before it begins. We have drawn these categories from other prevention materials which use the same names: Denial, Disavowal, Inaction, Appeasement, Appropriation, Co-Option, Repression and Backlash¹. The examples draw from a variety of settings and are not definitive - you might be able to think of others as well. We hope that using this tool will help you to better identify and challenge ableism and gender inequality in your workplace so that you can prevent violence against women with disabilities².



¹VicHealth (2018). (En)countering resistance: Strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. Melbourne.

²Our Watch & Women with Disabilities Victoria (2022). Changing the landscape: A national resource to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities. Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.

³Image adapted from: VicHealth (2018). (En)countering resistance: Strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. Melbourne.

Forms of resistance to disability inclusive PVAW practice

Denial



Excusing of how ableist and gendered drivers intersect to reduce impact of violence. Blaming a woman with disability for her experience.

How this happens: Discrediting the evidence about women with disabilities' experiences of violence, minimising their voices in public and private life. Social attitudes that support stereotypes and norms about women with disabilities.

How to prevent: Demonstrate the impact that intersecting drivers of ableism and gender inequality have by using the evidence to influence change. Draw support for lived expertise of women with disabilities.

Everyday examples: Condoning violence against women with disabilities. E.g.: "Sometimes you have to use a bit of force on someone like that".

How to address: Create safe, accessible opportunities for women with disabilities to share their lived experience and be recognised for their expertise.

Disavowal



Refusal to recognise responsibility to address ableist and gendered drivers of violence together, or to take part in processes of change.

How this happens: Organisational policies that diminish, refuse or excuse structural ableism and gender inequalities. Reinforcing institutional barriers of discrimination that women with disabilities experience in employment, service provision, and participation.

How to prevent: Follow and support the leadership and advocacy of women with disabilities to prevent violence. Affirm policies of inclusion into training and support that represents women with disabilities from your community.

Everyday examples: Unwillingness to make necessary workplace adjustments to accommodate disability. E.g.: "It's not ableist, it's just the way things are".

How to address: Influence discussions to take responsibility and challenge gendered and ableist structures or behaviour that led to the issue.

Inaction



Refusal or failure to implement progress toward preventing violence against women with disabilities by excusing, minimising, delaying, or blocking action.

How this happens: Failure of systems, institutions, and policies to promote women with disabilities' economic, legal, and societal autonomy. Deprioritising action to prevent violence against women with disabilities.

How to prevent: Communicate a case for change outlining the need to implement initiatives to address the ableist drivers of violence. Increasing the priority given to preventing violence against women with disabilities by persuading leaders and shifting resources to create change.

Everyday examples: Accepting violence, disrespect, and discrimination against women with disabilities. E.g.: "We don't have the resources to implement PVAWD".

How to address: Include and amplify the voices of women with disabilities in your community to demonstrate the need for funding equitable prevention activities.

Appeasement



Efforts to placate or pacify those advocating for change that limit its impact or action in preventing violence against women with disabilities.

How this happens: Adopting inclusive practices with a lack of integration into the day-to-day functions of an organisation. Lack of visible change used as an excuse to limit action to prevent violence against women with disabilities.

How to prevent: Set up clear monitoring and evaluation processes of programs and activities to track change and support for prevention of violence against women with disabilities. Communicate progress and celebrate small achievements to strengthen support and ensure momentum.

Everyday examples: Making statements about inclusion but failing to actively change disability inclusive protocols, or diversity within workforce and leadership. E.g.: "We've put a diversity of women in the images of our resources, isn't that enough?".

How to address: Follow the lead of women with disabilities to challenge ableist assumptions about visibility, make space for their voices and choices.

Appropriation



Simulating change while covertly undermining it.

How this happens: Creating a perceived commitment to prevent violence against women with disabilities but not implementing meaningful strategy. Inaction addressing ableist processes, and structures. Creating or focusing on processes which appear to uphold rigour but stifle change.

How to prevent: Provide and implement resources for an accessible prevention of violence against women strategy that is inclusive of women with disabilities. Include women with disabilities' voices into policies, training, and design of all resources. Form partnerships with local organisations that are driven by, and actively represent women with disabilities.

Everyday examples: Creating constant surveys and presenting research about the need to change but not dedicating resources to create change. E.g. "We used to have a woman with a disability working here and this is what she said..."

How to address: Collaborate with a range of community members, groups, and organisations to address violence against women with disabilities in your community.

Co-option



Using the language of progressive frameworks and goals such as 'equality', 'inclusive', or 'diversity' for reactionary ends that uphold unequal practices and discrimination against women with disabilities.

How this happens: Adopting policies and processes that contradict the evidence base and reinforce the ableist drivers of violence. Resourcing limits on capacity-building efforts.

How to prevent: Whole of organisational dialogue, training, and accountability to build trust and support for change. Connect intersectional experiences of women with disabilities into the design and implementation of gender-based violence prevention activities.

Everyday examples: Failing to acknowledge the barriers that reinforce violence against women with disabilities. E.g.: "We hire everyone based on merit and fit for the job, disability and gender doesn't come into it".

How to address: Create opportunities for women with disabilities in leadership roles. Invest in professional development and training to address ableist and sexist attitudes within the workplace.

Repression



Reversing or dismantling an initiative to prevent violence against women with disabilities.

How this happens: Weakening of meaningful prevention and inclusion policies. Reduction or removal of resourcing given to prevention and inclusion initiatives.

How to prevent: Centre the input of women with disabilities into the design and implementation of prevention policies. Allow for accessibility and inclusion to be resourced into budgets, timelines, and strategic planning.

Everyday examples: Workplaces returning to the office and not offering adequate flexible working arrangements, such as work from home, hybrid options, making it difficult for women with disabilities to be meaningfully employed post covid. E.g.: "We didn't have to keep doing that anymore because we achieved our goals."

How to address: Adapt activities, and workplace culture to support intersectional experiences, challenge power dynamics, and find equitable solutions to prevent violence against women with disabilities.

Backlash



Range of aggressive, deliberate responses and practices that deny women with disabilities' experiences of violence.

How this happens: Public opposition to promotion, inclusion and prevention of violence against women with disabilities.

How to prevent: Demonstrate strong leadership to change attitudes that support ableist and gender inequalities. Setting up strategies to support staff working to address violence against women with disabilities against burnout or backlash. Ensuring workplace has trauma-informed and trustworthy debriefing processes.

Everyday examples: Open hostility or patronising language against women with disabilities based on their assumed capacity. E.g.: "Can she really do that job?"

How to address: Call out myths and stereotypes about women with disabilities. Support the safety and trust of women with disabilities in your workplace by listening to their voices and following their lead.

What does resistance to disability inclusive PVAW look like in the workplace?

Denial



"Sometimes you have to use a bit of force on someone like that."

How to address:
Create safe, accessible opportunities for women with disabilities to share their lived experience and be recognised for their expertise.

Disavowal



"It's not ableist, it's just the way things are".

How to address:
Influence discussions to take responsibility and challenge gendered and ableist structures or behaviour that led to the issue.

Inaction



"We don't have the resources to implement PVAW".

How to address:
Include and amplify voices of women with disabilities in your community to demonstrate the need for funding equitable prevention activities.

Appeasement



"We've put a diversity of women in the images of our resources, isn't that enough?".

How to address:
Follow the lead of women with disabilities to challenge ableist assumptions about visibility, make space for their voices and choices.

Appropriation



"We used to have a woman with a disability working here and this is what she said..."

How to address:
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Co-option



"We hire everyone based on merit and fit for the job, disability and gender doesn't come into it".

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Create opportunities for women with disabilities in leadership roles. Invest in professional development and training to address ableist and sexist attitudes within the workplace.

Repression



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Backlash



"Can she really do that job?".

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Call out myths and stereotypes about women with disabilities. Support the safety and trust of women with disabilities in your workplace by listening to their voices and following their lead.

For more information about preventing violence against women with disabilities, please read Changing the Landscape: [Click here](#)

To audit your workplaces for Gender and Disability Inclusive PVAW practice, please use the WDV Women's Health Services PVAW Toolkit: [Click Here](#)

WDV provides fee for service training for professionals and organisations looking to upskill in the area of Prevention of Violence against Women with Disabilities, as well as in the area of the Health Rights and Barriers of Women with Disabilities.

For more information about our Prevention of Violence against Women with Disabilities training, please contact:

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