

VicHealth Roadshow

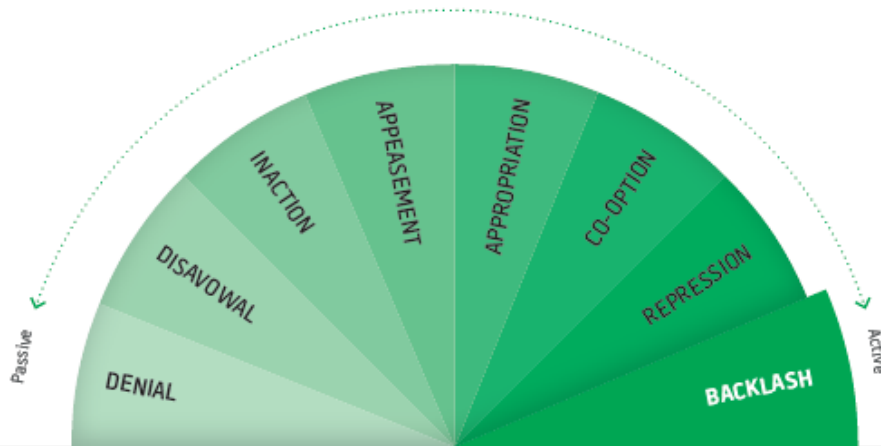
Victorian Health Promotion Foundation

# Managing resistance and backlash to gender equality initiatives

# What is resistance and backlash?

- ✓ The terms 'backlash' and 'resistance' are at times used interchangeably to refer to any form of resistance towards progressive social change
- ✓ More likely to come from the people who are advantaged by the status quo
- ✓ Can be at its greatest when existing structures are threatened
- ✓ Resistance can range from passive blocking techniques which seek to maintain the status quo, to strategies which aim to minimise or co-opt change efforts, to active, aggressive opposition in order to restore the old order
- ✓ You know you're starting to get results with your gender equality initiatives when you meet resistance!

# Activity: forms of resistance



## Forms of resistance

### DENIAL

*"There's no problem here."*

Denial of the problem or the credibility of the case for change. Blame the victims.

### APPROPRIATION

*"Of course we'd appoint more women, if only they were more experienced."*

Simulating change while covertly undermining it.

### DISAVOWAL

*"It's not my job to do something about it."*

Refusal to recognise responsibility.

### CO-OPTION

*"What about men's rights? Men are victims too, you know."*

Using the language of progressive frameworks and goals for reactionary ends.

### INACTION

*"It's not a priority right now."*

Refusal to implement a change initiative.

### REPRESSION

*"We tried that once and women didn't want to take up the promotion/training/opportunity."*

Reversing or dismantling a change initiative.

### APPEASEMENT

*"Yes. Yes. We must do something (one day)."*

Efforts to placate or pacify those advocating for change in order to limit its impact.

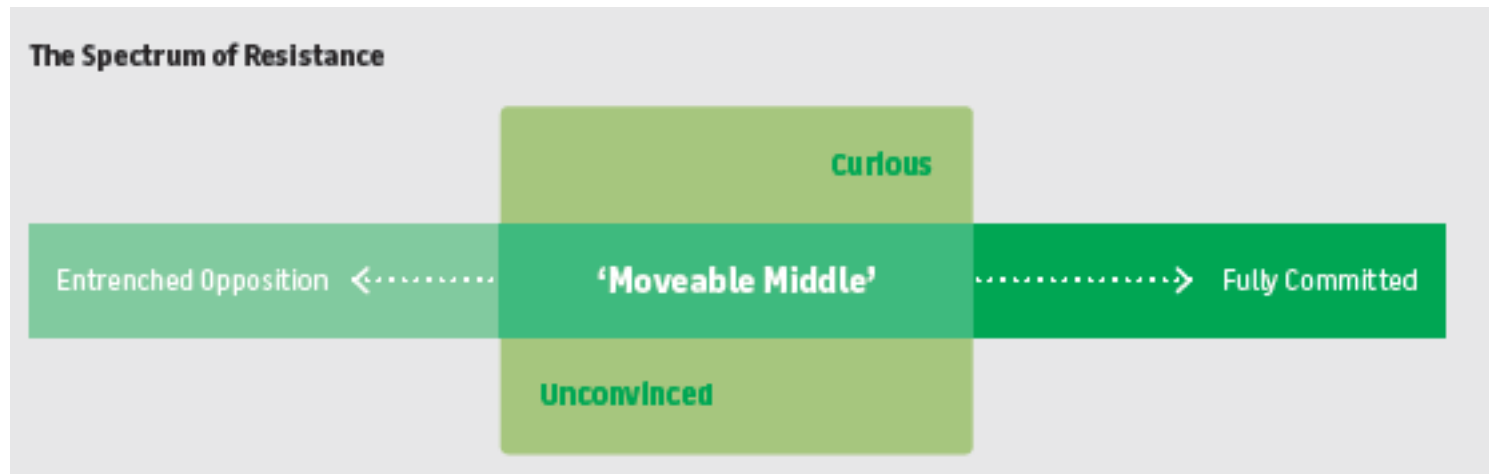
### BACKLASH

*"These feminists deserve all the abuse they get."*

Aggressive, attacking response.

<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/resistance>

# The spectrum of resistance



<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/resistance>

# Strategies to prepare for and respond to resistance

- **Framing strategies**
  - ✓ Continually articulate the rationale and benefits—noting the benefits to men as well as women
  - ✓ Offer clear, compelling accounts of the problem and the solutions
  - ✓ Real life stories and personal accounts
  - ✓ Acknowledge that gender is personal, interpersonal, and structural, and that it involves unequal relations of power

# Strategies to prepare for and respond to resistance

- **Organisational strategies**
  - ✓ Gender equality/equity strategies and policies
  - ✓ Secure support from those in power
  - ✓ Address efforts specifically to those individuals and groups who are most likely to be resistant
  - ✓ Form strategic partnerships and allies
  - ✓ Engage in open debate and discussion
  - ✓ Challenge rationalisations for resistance
  - ✓ Establish clear monitoring processes

# Strategies to prepare for and respond to resistance

- **Teaching and learning strategies**
  - ✓ **The environment** – Safe, respectful, supportive
  - ✓ **The content** - Framing strategies, lived experiences, storytelling
  - ✓ **The teachers** – Content experts, authentic, empathetic
  - ✓ **Teaching practice** – Sufficient duration and intensity, participatory, engages emotions, fosters empathy, relevant
  - ✓ **Inoculate against misinformation** – Highlight facts not myths, use framing strategies to present sound arguments and evidence, acknowledge doubt and fears.

# Strategies to prepare for and respond to resistance

- **Individual strategies**

- ✓ **Identify allies** - find those like-minded people and creating a supportive community of practice
- ✓ **Choose your battles** - Focus your efforts on those who you can influence, and set achievable goals for yourself
- ✓ **Recognise domination techniques** - making invisible, ridiculing, withholding information, double-edged punishment and shame and guilt
- ✓ **Dealing with online abuse** - it is vital to have guidelines around social media to protect you, your people and your audiences from online trolling
- ✓ **Practice self-care** – looking after your own well-being is paramount.



# Activity

Post your resistance/backlash story under one of the four categories:

- Framing strategies
- Organisational strategies
- Teaching/learning strategies
- Individual strategies

Any stories that didn't fit within these categories?

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<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/resistance>