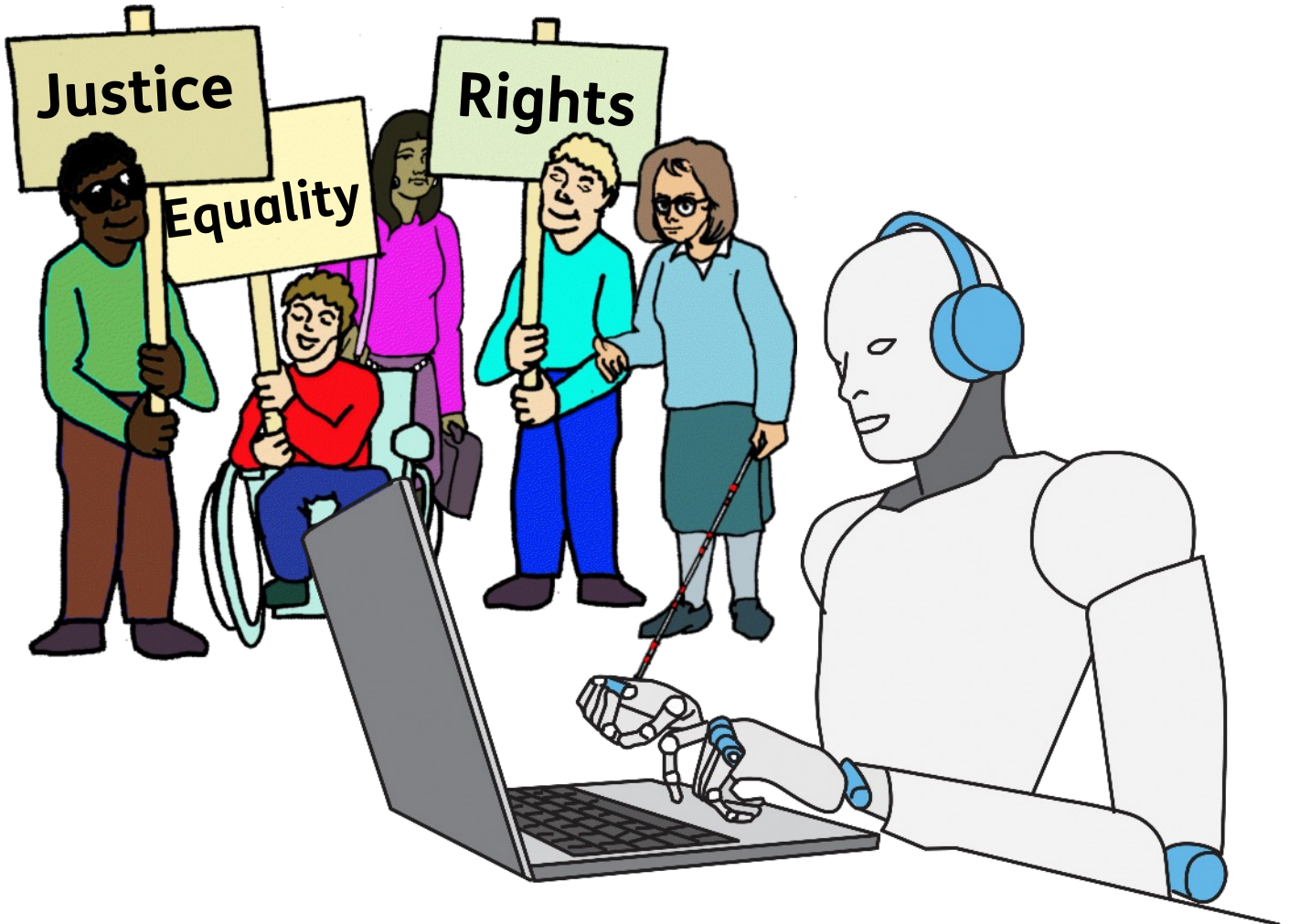




The rights of people with disabilities



Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities

EasyRead version of:
Rights of person with disabilities
Report of the Special Rapporteur
on the rights of persons with disabilities
(A/HRC/49/52)

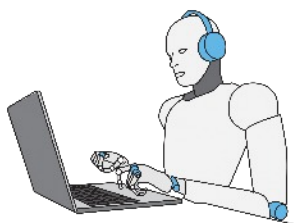


<https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/49/52>



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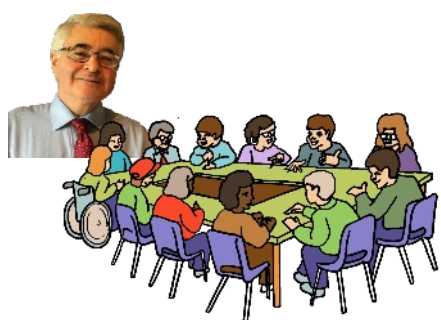
The **Special Rapporteur** on the rights of persons with disabilities, Gerard Quinn, wrote this report. He helps countries understand how to make sure the rights of people with disabilities are respected.



The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities is part of the **United Nations**.



The United Nations (UN) is a group made up of 193 countries. They work together to make the world a safer and better place for everyone.

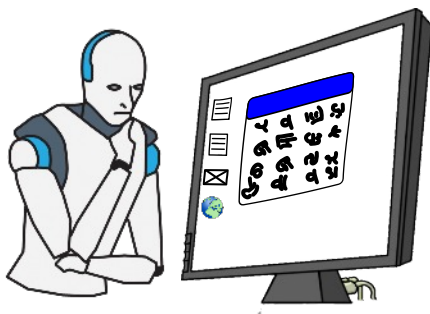


In 2021 the Special Rapporteur took part in many important meetings and activities. He helped many States and groups who make rules and laws to think about the human rights of people with disabilities.

Report on Artificial Intelligence



This is an Easy Read version of the Special Rapporteur's report of 2021 (A/HRC/49/52) on **artificial intelligence** and the rights of people with disabilities.



Artificial intelligence is about making machines smart.

The machine might be a computer, a computer program or a robot.

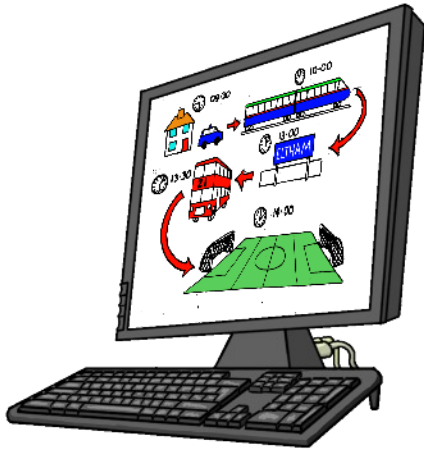


The machines are smart because they:

- learn from information they are given



- learn from information they find in the environment or online



- they can give information or make decisions.

This is what we call artificial intelligence. We often say AI for short when talking about artificial intelligence.

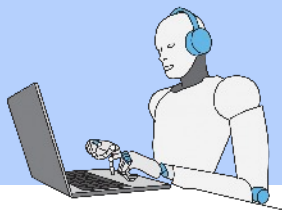


For this report, 35 Countries and groups told the Special Rapporteur what they thought in a survey. This included asking **organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs)**.

Sometimes we say OPDs for short when talking about organizations of persons with disabilities.



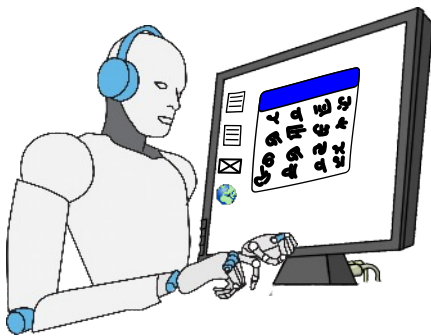
The Special Rapporteur thanks everyone who helped with the ideas and recommendations of this report.



About Artificial intelligence

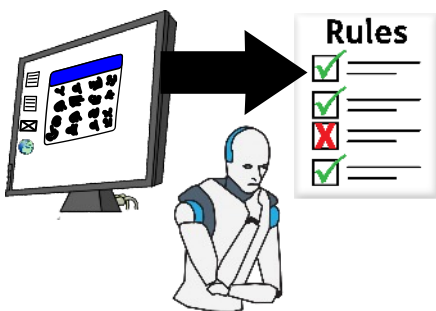


Artificial intelligence is about making machines smart. We often say AI for short when talking about artificial intelligence.

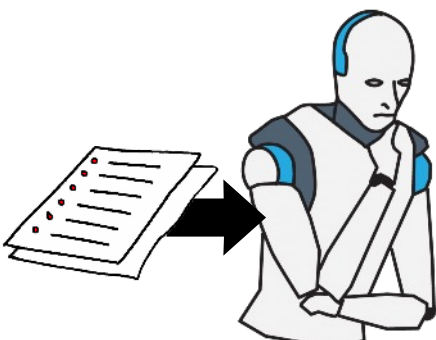


AI can use machine learning to be smart. Machine learning is when:

- the machine is trained to learn lots of information



- the machine then uses this information to make rules about what steps the computer must follow

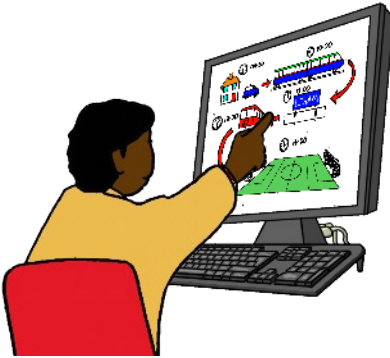


- when new information is given to the machines the steps are followed to make a decision.

The AI program using machine learning:



- might automatically make a decision. This is called **automated decision making** or sometimes **ADM**

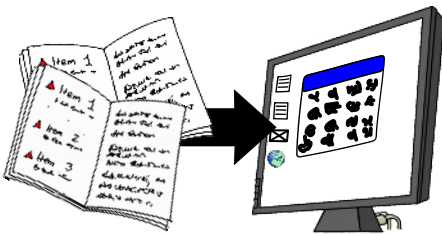


- give information to a human who then uses it to make the decision. Sometimes people agree with the decisions made by the machines without thinking about it very much.



An AI program using machine learning can be made to work on a task about the same as human but it will:

- be faster



- be able to use huge amount of information



- give consistent answers.



Artificial intelligence is supposed to be free from human **bias**.

Bias is when people or groups of people might be treated differently to others in a way that is unfair.



It can be hard to check if decisions using AI are fair for people with disabilities.



Sometimes:

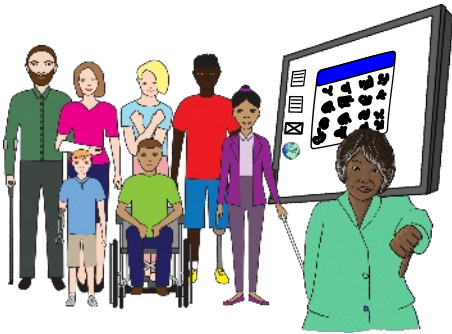
- the rules and steps that the machines use are kept secret because an organisation owns them and they are worth money



- the AI rules can only be understood by people who can read the computer code



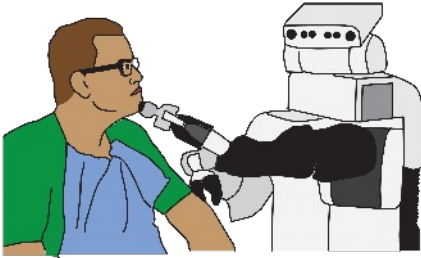
- information used to train the machine is deleted to keep it private.



Using AI to select people for a new job is one example when the rule might not be fair for people with disabilities.



Artificial intelligence and people with disabilities



Artificial intelligence and machine learning is making changes to our world and how we live quickly.



AI is used by governments and private organizations in many different ways.



AI can help people with disabilities. If used responsibly AI can:

- support inclusion and equality



- make jobs more accessible



- improve access to goods and services



- change and improve disability services



- support people living independently



- improve education.

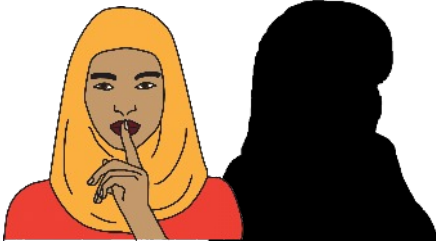


When AI is used irresponsibly it can cause problems for:

- many people and groups of people



- people with disabilities.

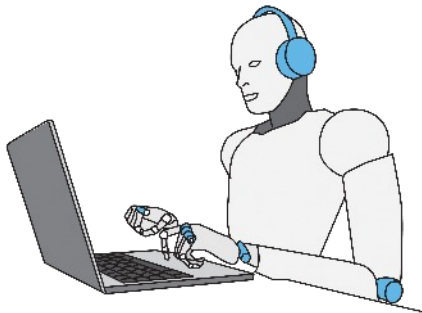


There can be problems with:

- privacy



- unfair decisions



- **bias** in the information that is used to train the machines.

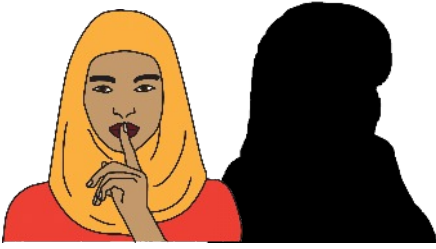


The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an agreement that sets out what Countries must do to make sure people with disabilities have the same rights as everybody else.



The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is sometimes called the CRPD.

AI can impact the rights of people with disabilities that are set out in the CRPD. This includes the rights to:



- privacy



- make choices



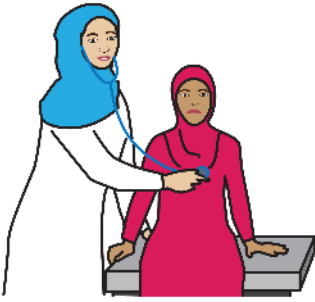
- live independently



- employment



- education



- health



- being treated equally

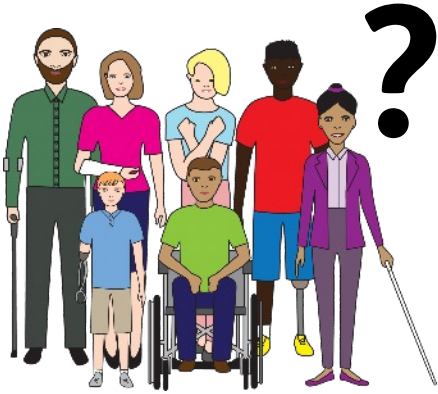


- not be **discriminated** against.

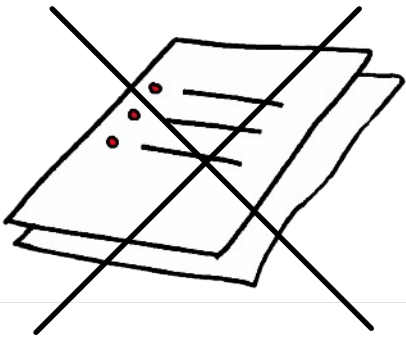
Being **discriminated** against is when someone is treated unfairly or doesn't get the changes they need help them be treated equally.



The United Nations, international organizations and groups, Countries have been thinking about AI. They want to make sure AI is fair and can help people in good ways.



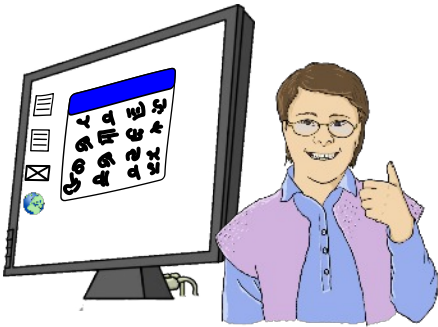
Some of this thinking about AI has included how it might impact people with disability.



But there is not much information that is just about people with disability and AI.



How Artificial Intelligence can help people with disabilities

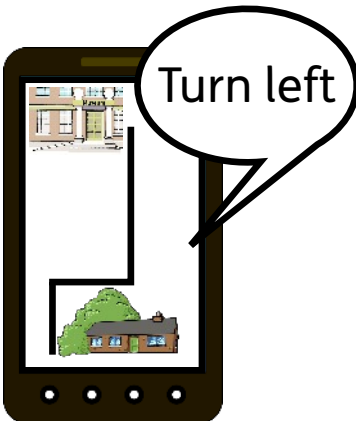


AI has led to many good tools and programs for people with disability.

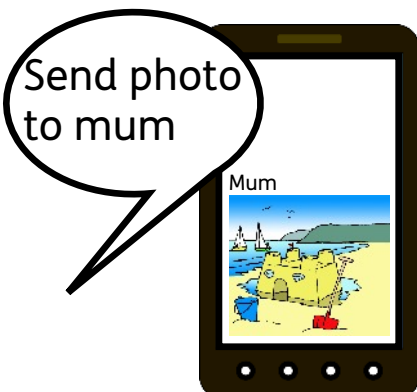


AI tools to support the mobility of people with disability include:

- assistive technology that show accessible routes



- tools that support people who are blind or have low vision to find places in their community



AI eye tracking and voice recognition programs help people with disabilities:

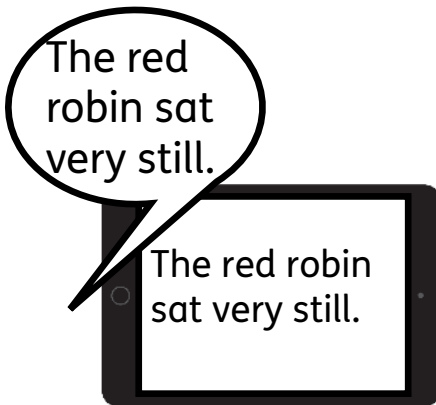
- to access and share information



- to access education



- with communication.



AI tools to support education for people with disabilities include:

- speech-to-text software

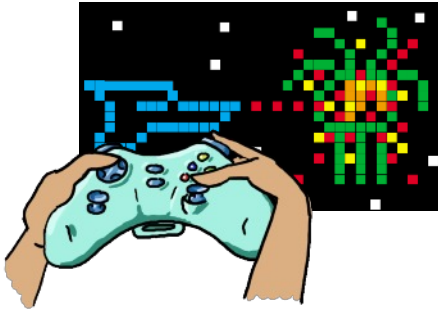


- signing **avatars**.

An **avatar** is an animation of a person made by a computer. A signing avatar is animation of someone using sign language.



- AI tutoring for students, where the computer helps the student learn



- games to help people learn social skills and problem solving.

AI tools and programs to support health include:



- **exoskeletons**

An **exoskeleton** is a man-made skeleton that can go on the outside of the body to support movement. AI is used to teach the exoskeleton how and when to move.



- tools to diagnose and recommend treatments for people who have health needs



- new tools to support people with mental health needs.

AI is being used with robots and other tools to provide care and assistance. This could:



- support people with disability to live independently



- have some risks.



Some of the problems with AI for people with disabilities



AI is used in some countries to decide if a person should get **social protection benefits**.

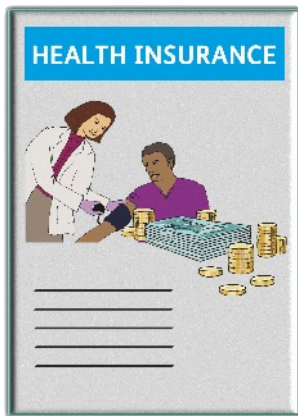
A **social protection benefit** is money or services given to people by the government to reduce poverty and inequality.



Social protection benefits can be given to people with disabilities.



It is a problem if the AI uses biased information to make decisions that are unfair for people with disabilities.



AI is used by companies to decide about the **health insurance** they sell.

Health insurance is money you pay regularly so you can have money to pay for services if you get sick.

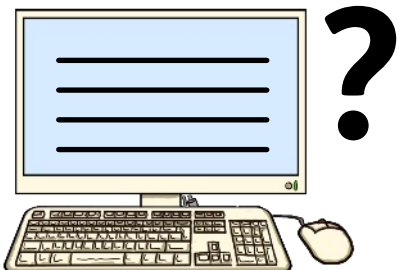


It is a problem if the AI decides a person with a disability:

- needs to pay more than is fair



- can't have health insurance because of their disability.



Because AI has been used to make the decisions it can often be hard to find out why the decision was made.

There are problems with AI being used to find the right person for a job when:



- a person doesn't check the AI decision people with disability can miss out in unfair ways



- the AI program only looks for people with education and jobs that people with disability have been excluded from before. The past unfair decisions about education and work can lead to more unfair decisions if this is not thought about properly.



- an online test or video to get a job is checked by AI. People with disability can be left out unfairly because the AI checks have not been tested on people with disability.



- a **chat-bot** is used for interviews to apply for a job. This can be inaccessible for people who use a screen reader and other people with disabilities.

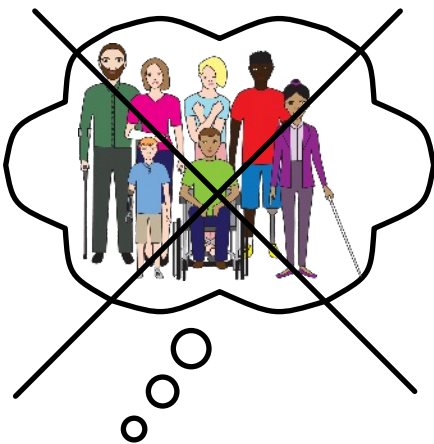
A **chat-bot** is an AI computer that communicates with people using text on their phone on a computer.



There are problems when AI is used to check if people are doing their work. Sometimes the AI tool says people with disabilities need to be checked about their work more than other people.



There are problems when AI has been used to decide who can get an education.



The problem in most situations is that the AI programs and tools have been made without:

- thinking about people with disability
- training the tools using people with disability.



The human rights of people with disabilities when Artificial Intelligence is used

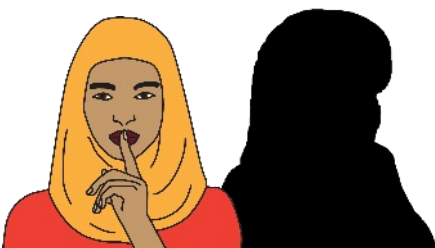


The CRPD says that Countries must:

- stop discrimination against people with disabilities when AI tools and products are made and used



- encourage private companies to make sure any new AI tools and products accessible for everyone



- ensure the privacy of people with disabilities is respected when AI is made or used



The most important thing to do is to make sure that AI tools and products:

- are fair

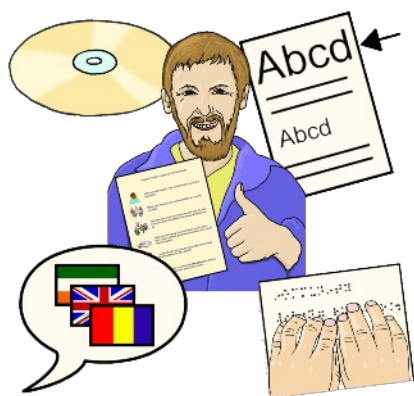


- don't discriminate

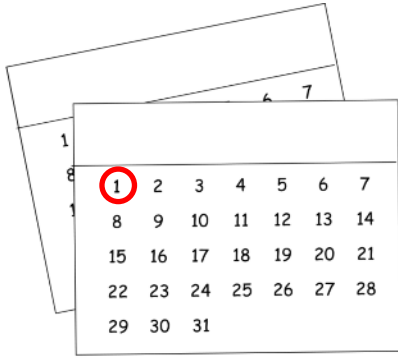


- treat people with disabilities equally.

AI and the right to be treated fairly and equally



Reasonable changes are changes made to a service, information or product to make sure people with disabilities have fair and equal access. Some examples are providing information in an Easy Read document or having more time to do a task.

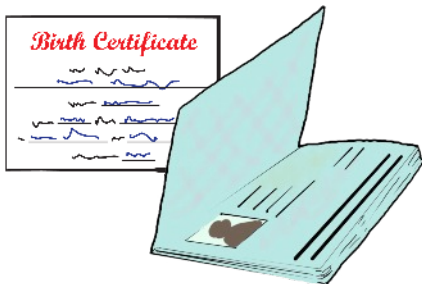


Reasonable changes may be needed to make sure AI tools and products are fair and equal for people with disabilities:

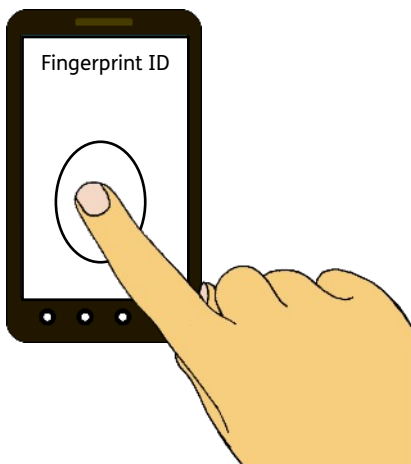
- changes needed should be made right from the start



- companies should not wait for people with disability to ask.

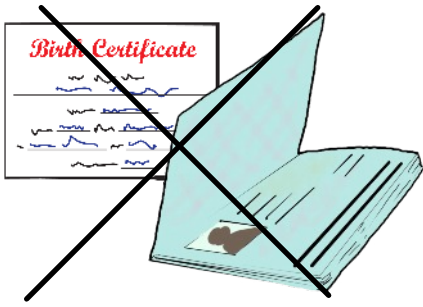


The CRPD says people with disabilities have the right to have identification records, like birth certificates, like everyone else.



AI tools can be used to identify people by checking their biometrics. An AI biometric is the measurement of a part of a person's body like their fingerprint or face. The AI tool checks if the biometric matches the person to say who they are/tell their identify.

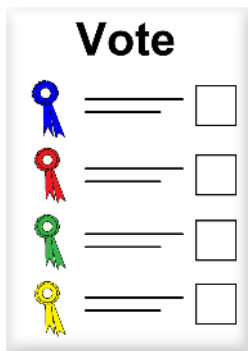
AI tools to check identity are sometimes used:



- with groups of people who have trouble getting birth certificates and other identity papers



- to access education and health care

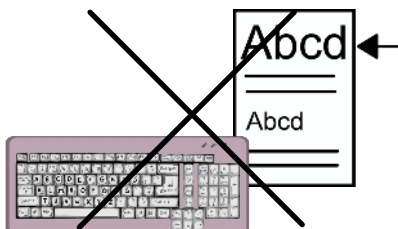


- to vote

Many AI biometrics tools for identity should be fair and also be helping people with disabilities but often:



- they have not had changes made to include people with disabilities



- they are not accessible.

AI and the rights to be respected, treated fairly and make decisions



The CRPD says people with disability:

- are free to make their own choices



- are to be respected by the law like everyone else.



When we make choices we need to:

- have the information we need to make the choice



- know we are making a choice.

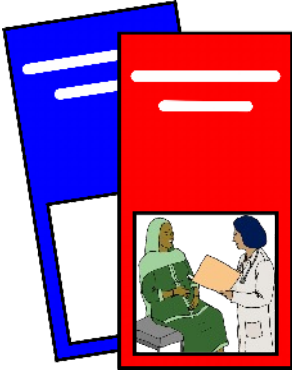


Some AI tools make decisions that impact people with disabilities without them knowing.

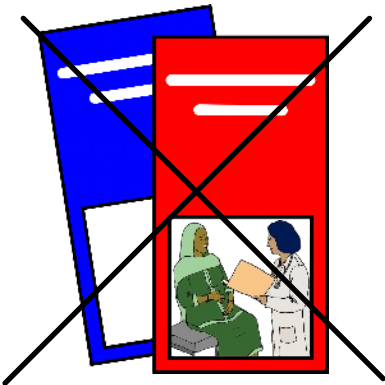


The CRPD says people with disabilities have the right to:

- marry and have a family



- information about family planning to help decide about these things.

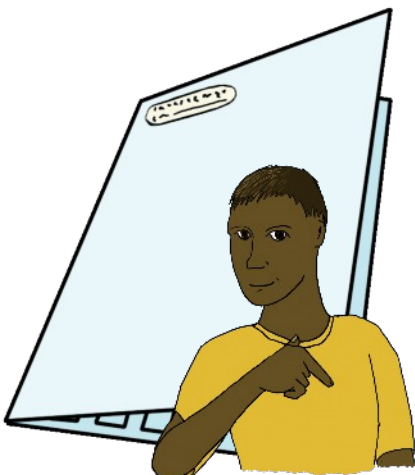


We are not sure if AI tools used to make decisions in health and family planning might stop people with disabilities from getting this information, accidentally or on purpose.

AI and the right to privacy

The CRPD says personal information about people with disability that:

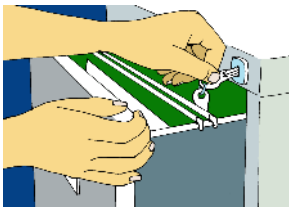
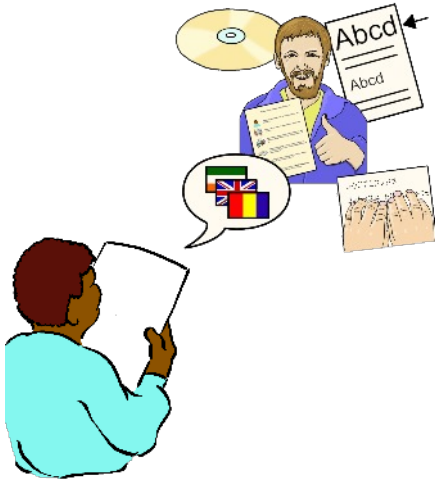
- they create
- is collected about them
- comes from machine learning AI tools





should be:

- something they have a say about
- only shared in confidential ways
- accessible
- used in a way that can be understood
- kept private or confidential the same as everyone else.



AI and the right to work

The CRPD says people with disabilities have a right to work like everyone else. People with disabilities must be treated fairly:

- when they apply for a job





- in all steps to get a job



- when they are working



- if they apply for a higher job at their workplace.



Reasonable changes must be made to ensure people with disabilities:

- are treated fairly and equally when they apply for work



- can work safely and are treated equally at work.

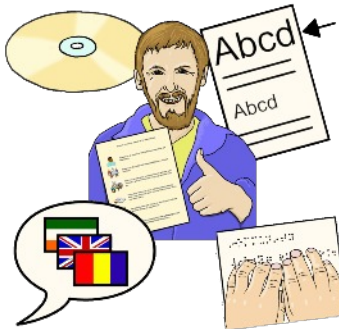


AI tools must:

- include reasonable changes



- not discriminate when reasonable changes are made



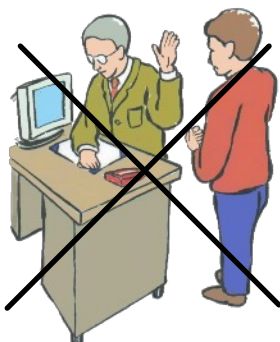
- be accessible.

AI and the right to education

The CRPD says people with disabilities should be included equally and fairly in all education. AI should:



- be used to make education more inclusive of people with disability



- never make discrimination worse.

AI and the right to a good enough standard of living



The CRPD says people with disabilities have the right to:

- a good enough standard of living



- enough money for the food, clothing, housing, medicines, clean water and services they need.



Some people with disabilities have lost work because jobs are now done by automatic robots. This can mean more people are needing social protection benefits.



More governments are using AI to decide if people should get:

- social protection benefits
- support for disability specific services





It is a problem if the AI:

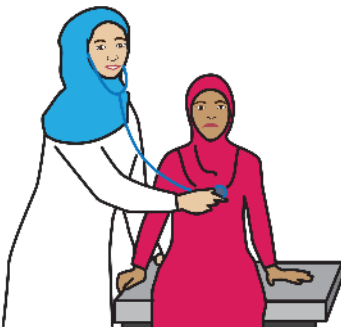
- is not open and clear
- uses biased information to make decisions that are unfair for people with disabilities.

AI and the right to a health and health services they need for their disability

The CRPD says people with disabilities have the right to access:



- health services



- health services they need because of their disability.



AI is helping in some areas of health. People with disabilities must have equal access to these improvements.

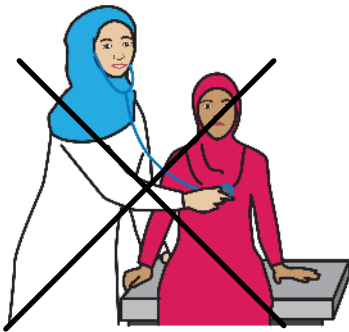


Automated AI decisions are being used to decide who can access services:

- this is sometimes a way services cut costs



- people with disabilities can be unfairly denied a service.



People with disability should never miss out on health care because of their disability.



People with disability have the right to equal access to health and **life insurance**. There must not be any discrimination using AI about these decisions.

Life insurance is money you pay regularly so your family or people who depend on you can have money when you die.

AI and the right to have a say and access information



The CRPD says people with disabilities have same rights as everyone else to:

- to find out and give information

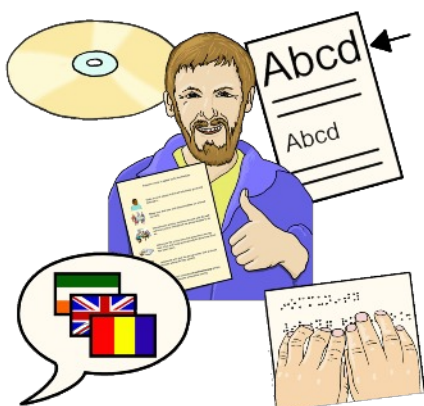


- say what they want.



AI can help make some information more accessible. Countries are encouraged to ask that private companies and media ensure information:

- is accessible

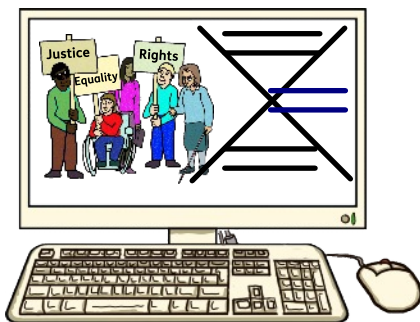


- is provided in Easy Read, sign language, Braille or other ways that are accessible.

The rights of people with disabilities are not respected when AI is:



- sometimes used by governments to check and remove information on the internet



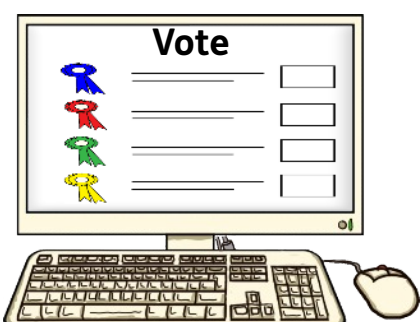
- remove information posted by people with disabilities or organisations of people with disability who are protesting



- people are bullied online using AI tools.

AI and the right to be involved in politics

The CRPD says people with disabilities have the right to take part in politics and vote. The rights of people with disabilities must be upheld when AI is used in:



- online voting



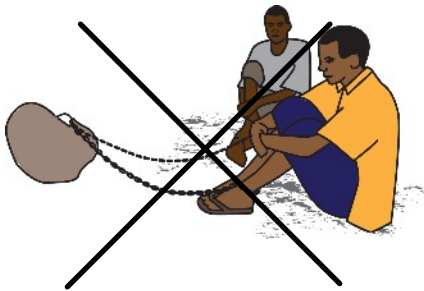
- voter education



- checking and removing incorrect information from the internet.

AI and protecting people during risky situations and emergencies

The CRPD says people with disabilities have the right to protection during risky situation and emergencies. AI can help protect people with disabilities:



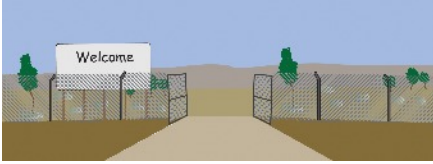
- it may be able to help in preventing human slavery



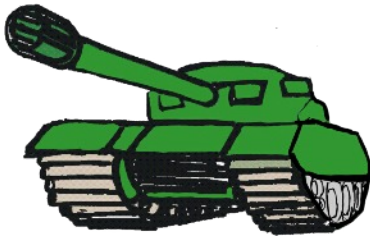
- it has been used to support people with disabilities who are **refugees**.

Refugees are people who have been made to leave their country because it was not safe to stay.

AI can also have terrible impacts on people with disabilities when there are risky situations. AI can be used:



- to check if people can pass through a gate or a border when they are moving between countries or areas. The AI hasn't been trained to check people who have a disability in a fair way.



- for **automatic weapons**. Sometimes automatic weapons can kill everyday people who aren't fighting in a **conflict**.

Automatic weapons can keep putting in new bullets and firing then after it is started. When AI is used with an automatic weapon a smart machine can start the firing of bullets.

Conflict is when groups of people or countries don't agree about important things.



People with disabilities should be involved in work to make and use these AI tools.

AI and other rights



The CRPD says Countries should:

- work together to make sure AI can help people with disabilities and respects their rights



- have rules about buying AI tools that make sure the tools are fair and do not discriminate against people with disabilities



- makes laws about **ownership rights** that don't make barriers for people with disability.

Ownership rights are when someone or a company owns something. They might own an AI tool or program. The law says other people can't look at what makes the tool work or use the tool without the owner saying it is allowed.

AI and working together with people with disabilities



When Countries make new laws and rules about AI they should:

- ask people with disabilities and organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) what they think and use their ideas



- use what they say to help make the plans.



When private companies make and share AI tools and programs they should:

- ask people with disabilities what they think and use their ideas



- employ people with disabilities who understand needs and discrimination



- ask women, children and older people with disabilities when AI products have an impact on them use what they say to help make the plans.

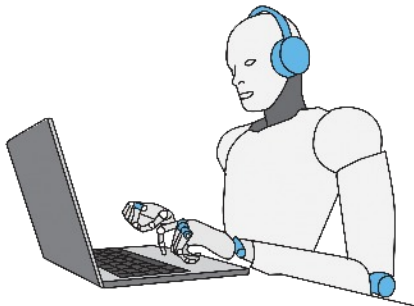
Other ways AI can discriminate



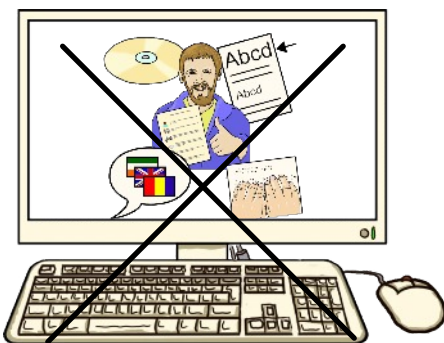
There are other ways people with disabilities are discriminated against when AI is used:



- an AI search on the internet for an athlete is unlikely to show pictures of an athlete with disability



- data used in machine learning for employment can keep barriers against people with disability going



- AI testing systems for jobs may not include reasonable changes or be accessible and people with disabilities miss out unfairly



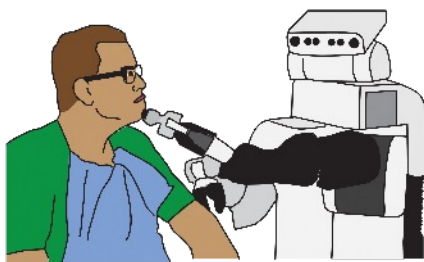
- AI tools used by banks sometimes have data rules that can be unfair to people with disabilities



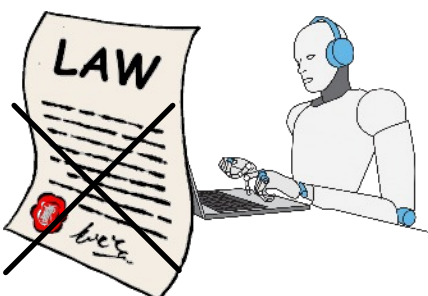
- **facial recognition technology (FRT)** uses AI to look at someone's face and make decisions about their behaviour. The FRT tools can make mistakes about people with disabilities



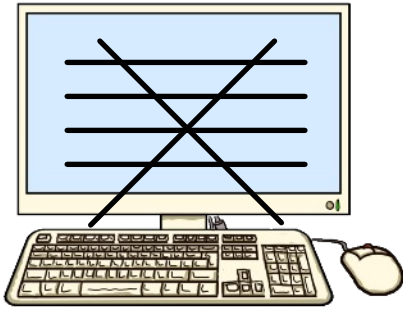
- **emotional recognition technology (ERT)** uses AI to look at how people show emotions and can sometime work out if someone has a learning disability and discriminate them. With ERT there can be problems with privacy and confidentiality



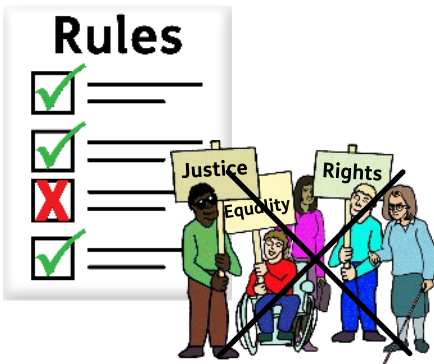
- disability service providers could use AI tools instead of human carers. This can be risk the mental health of people with disability and how they are included in society



- there have been some protests about AI and the rights of people with disabilities but not many. There are no laws about the rights of people with disability and AI



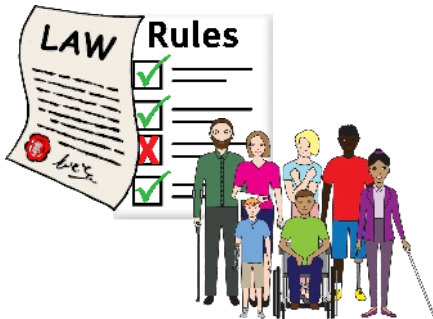
- some people think the bias in data can be removed. It is tricky as disability is not all the same. Data that represents all types of disabilities might be hard to collect but it is possible.



- laws about AI, human rights and ownership of AI tools and programs is a new area. There are worldwide rules for making and using AI in an ethical way. But the rules didn't think about the rights of people with disabilities.



What we should do



What Countries should do

Countries need to think about people with disabilities and the CRPD when they make rules and laws for AI.



Countries should make sure human rights are thought about and included when rules are made about AI:

- making sure they are fair for people with disabilities



- they do not discriminate against people with disabilities



- they do not harm people with disabilities when they are used.



Countries should think about human rights and AI when they make rules about **digital inclusion**.

Digital inclusion is when plans and work is done to help more people use technology including the internet.



Countries need to make special rules for AI tools that use Facial Recognition Technology (FRT) and Emotional Recognition Technology (ERT):



- these tools often discriminate against people with disabilities



- should be stopped until fair rules can be made



- people with disability and OPDs should be included in thinking about and making the rules.



Countries laws and rules about human rights should include:

- rules about how AI is made, used and brought by private companies



- rules about how data about individuals, including people with disabilities is used or shared



- think about and include rules to protect people with disability from the problems of AI.

Countries should make sure reasonable changes are made to AI tools and programs to ensure people with disability are treated equally. Countries should:



- provide education to private companies and government about reasonable changes



- include people with disabilities and OPD's in providing the education



- encourage companies making AI to think about using AI to show when reasonable changes are needed.



Countries should make sure government only buys AI tools and products from companies that follow human rights laws.



Countries should support organisations of people with disabilities (OPD) to:

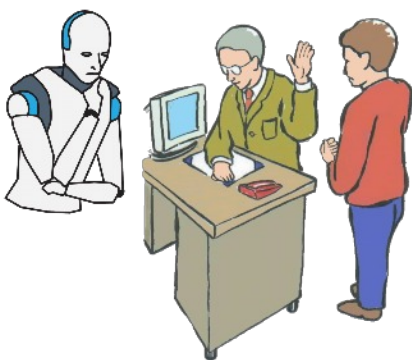
- keep a check on how AI impacts people with disabilities



- advocate for AI that is fair and includes people with disabilities

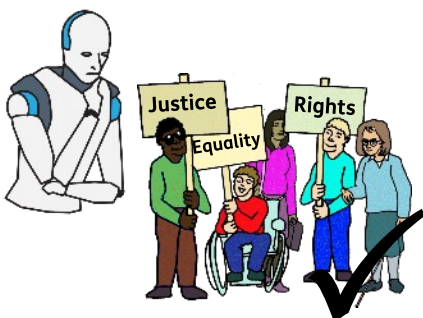


- talk with private companies about how AI can be harmful and discriminate.

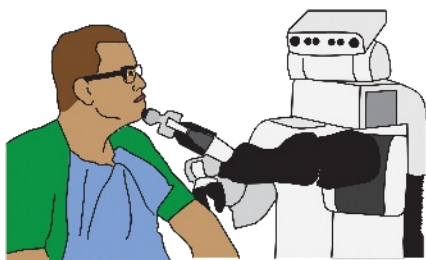


Countries should think about collecting information and reporting on:

- work they do to find out and make changes when AI tools have discriminated against people with disability



- how they have used AI to better help people with disabilities to enjoy their rights



- using AI to find good solutions for people with disability



- how AI might have been used to meet the CRPD.



Countries could include this in their reports to the UN.



What National Human Rights Institutions should do

National Human Rights Institutions are set up by law in a country to teach about and protect human rights.

They should:



- be involved in making rules and laws about AI.



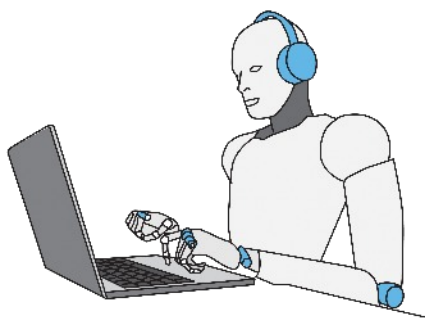
- make sure the CRPD and human rights are thought about in the rules and laws



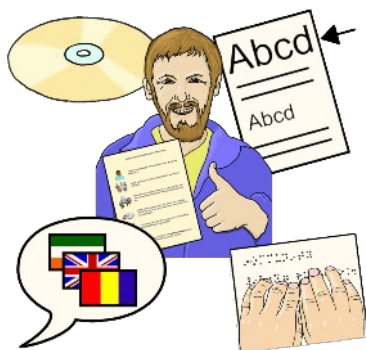
- think about having a job for someone whose focus is about the impact of AI.

What private companies should do

Private companies should:



- be clear and open about how their AI tools and products work

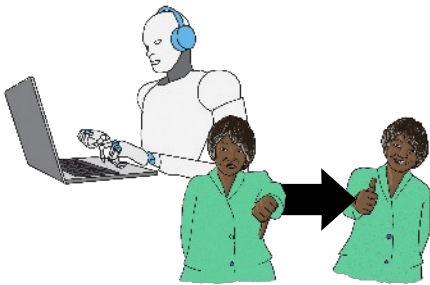


- have accessible information about this.

Private companies should check if new AI tools or machine learning effect the human rights of people with a disability. They should:



- do the checks with people with disability, organisation of people with disability and people with disabilities who might use the tools

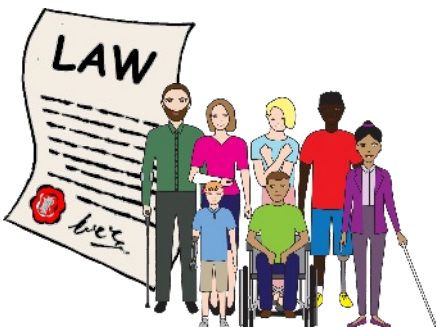


- find out and fix the tools if they harm or discriminate against people with disabilities

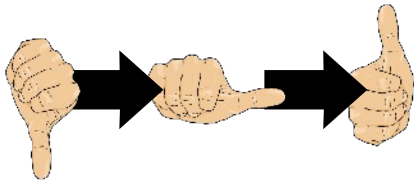


- stop any future problems.

When a human rights problem is found in an AI tool or program:



- people with disabilities should have access to laws and rules to protect them like everyone else



- there should be ways to try and fix the problem, like a complaints process



- the harm caused to the person should be addressed.



Machine learning data sets should:

- include the wide range of information about people with disability



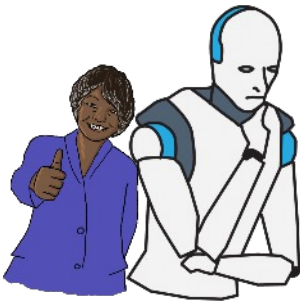
- be developed with the input of people with disability or organisations of people with disability (OPD)



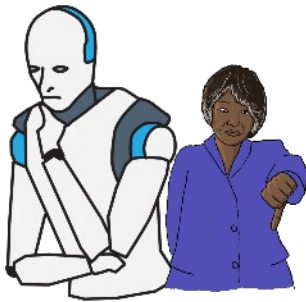
People with disability or lived experience of disability should be employed in making AI and machine learning tools.

What should the United Nations do

The United Nations should include thinking about people with disability in all their work about AI. They should think about:



- the possible positive impacts



- the problems.



The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy is sometimes called UNDIS.



UNDIS checks if the work of the United Nations:

- follows the CRPD



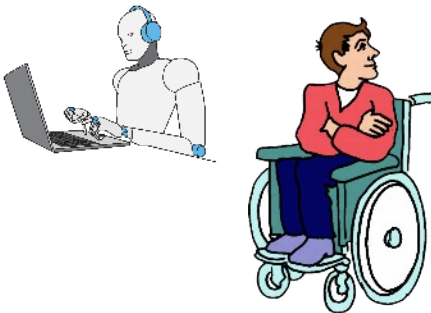
- thinks about people with disabilities



- includes people with disabilities in planning how to fix problems.

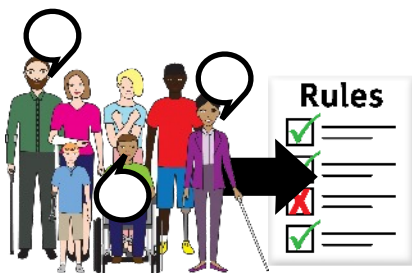


The United Nations should make sure the UNDIS is changed to have rules about only buying AI tools that make sure the rights of people with disabilities are respected and valued.



The United Nations groups that check how Countries are upholding human rights should:

- include the impact on people with disability in their valuable work on AI

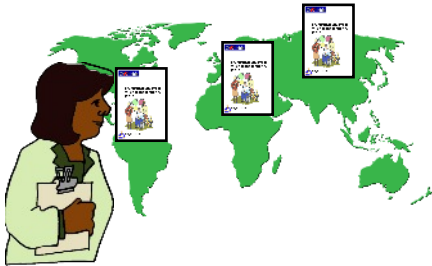


- think about including comments about the rights of people with disability in suggestions for AI laws and rules.

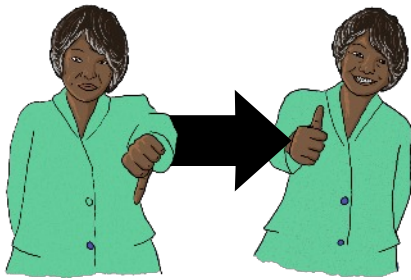


The United Nations CRPD Committee is a group of people who work for the United Nations. They:

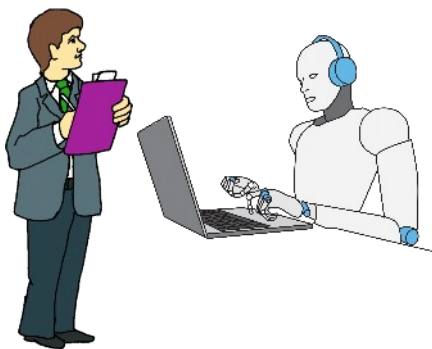
- understand the CRPD very well



- check how Countries are putting the CRPD into action



- makes recommendations to Countries about what they can do better.



The United Nations CRPD Committee should:

- think about making it clear that countries are expected to monitor private companies making and using AI.



When companies buy AI products from around the world we need rules that:

- protect the rights of people with disability

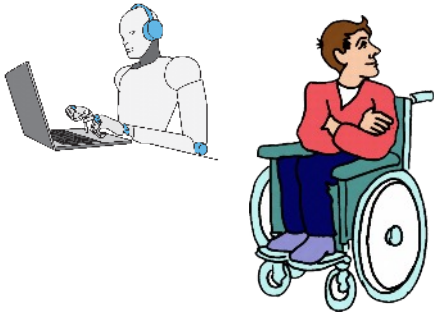


- find ways to protect the ownership of AI tools and program and protect the rights to equal treatment of people with disability.



What we need to know more about

We need to work together with people with disabilities and organisations of people with disabilities to:



- find out more about how AI impacts the rights of people with disability



- make changes to ensure the rights of people with disability are upheld.

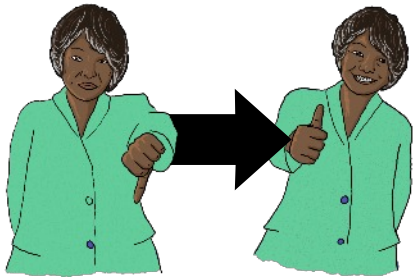
We need to find out how AI impact the rights of people with disabilities:



- in positive ways



- in negative ways, on purpose or by accident



- how to fix problems with AI when they happen



- how to stop problems with AI happening.



We need to find out how AI can help countries to apply the CRPD and support the rights of people with disabilities.



We need to find out more about how AI impacts people with disabilities in:

- education



- getting a job



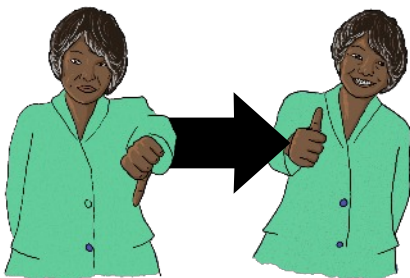
- living independently



- housing



- services who give money and support

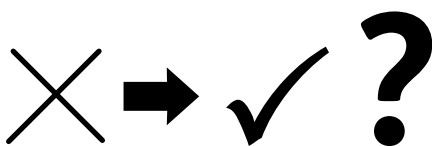


- making services better can be used to improve how the implement.



AI is made and developed around the world. We need to find out more about how:

- agreements about ownership might make it difficult for Countries to make rules to protect the rights of people with disabilities



- what needs to change if the rules about ownership are a problem.



What the words mean

Artificial intelligence is about making machines smart. The machine might be a computer, a computer program or a robot. The machines are smart because they:

- learn from information they are given
- learn from information they find in the environment or online
- they can give information or make decisions.

This is what we call artificial intelligence. We often say AI for short when talking about artificial intelligence.

Automated decision making is when the AI program using machine learning might automatically make a decision. Automated decision making is sometimes called ADM.

Avatar is an animation of a person made by a computer.

Bias is when people or groups of people might be treated differently to others in a way that is unfair.

Conflict is when groups of people or countries don't agree about important things.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an agreement that sets out what Countries must do to make sure people with disabilities have the same rights as everybody else. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is sometimes called the CRPD.

Digital inclusion is when plans and work is done to help more people use technology including the internet.

Discrimination is when someone is treated unfairly or doesn't get the changes they need help them be treated equally.

Emotional recognition technology (ERT) uses AI to look at how people show emotions and can sometime work out if someone has a learning disability.

Exoskeleton is a man-made skeleton that can go on the outside of the body to support movement.

Facial recognition technology (FRT) uses AI to look at someone's face and make decisions about their behaviour.

Machine learning is when:

- the machine is trained to learn using lots of information
- the machine then uses this information to make rules about what steps the computer must follow
- when new information is given to the machines the steps are followed to make a decision.

National Human Rights Institutions are set up by law in a country to teach about and protect human rights.

Organisations of persons with disabilities are sometimes called OPDs. OPDs are organizations that have and understanding of disability. Many of the people who work at the OPDs have a disability or have a family member with a disability. OPDs help people with disability have their say.

Ownership rights is when a someone or a company owns something. They might own an AI tool or program. The law says other people can't look at what makes it work or use the tool without the owner saying it is allowed.

Reasonable changes are changes made to a service, information or product to make sure people with disabilities have fair and equal access. Some examples are providing information in an Easy Read document or having more time to do a task.

Social protection benefit is money or services given to people by the government to reduce poverty and inequality.

The **United Nations CRPD Committee** is a group of people who work for the United Nations. They:

- understand the CRPD very well
- check how Countries are putting the CRPD into action
- makes recommendations to Countries about what they can do better.

The **United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy** is sometimes called UNDIS. UNDIS checks if the work of the United Nations:

- follows the CRPD
- thinks about people with disabilities
- includes people with disabilities in planning how to fix problems.



Credits

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