

Artificial Intelligence is increasingly used across judicial systems worldwide. Courts use AI for tasks such as predicting case risks, assigning bail, categorizing evidence, legal research, and even creating suggested rulings. Countries already using AI tools include the United States, China, Estonia, Brazil and the United Kingdom. These systems process large amounts of data faster than humans and are expected to reduce case backlogs, increase efficiency, and assist judges in decision making.

The use of AI in courts has also raised ethical and legal concerns. Critics warn that AI can reinforce racial, gender or socioeconomic bias, depending on the datasets used to train the system. One controversial example is Compas, a risk assessment program used in the U.S criminal courts that has been accused of assigning higher risk scores to defendants of minority backgrounds. Additionally AI algorithms are often black boxes meaning their decision process is not transparent or understandable to humans, threatening principles of due process and accountability.

The United Nations and multiple international organizations emphasize that judicial decisions must remain a human responsibility. While AI can be a tool, it must not replace human judgment. The central debate focuses on how to regulate AI systems to ensure fairness, transparency and respect for fundamental rights. Many countries lack specific legal frameworks governing AI in the courts making regulation and ethical oversight a global priority.

If implemented responsibly AI has the potential to transform the justice system by increasing access to justice speeding up court processes and reducing human error. The challenge lies in balancing innovation with human rights and ensuring AI strengthens rather than weakens the rule of law.

Key Issues

- 1 AI systems learn from historical data that may already contain bias
2. Discrimination in sentencing, bail decisions, or trial outcomes.
3. Courts must guarantee equality before the law biased

Key Events

1. 2016 U.S media investigates COMPAS revealing possible racial bias in risk assessment algorithms

2. 2019 Estonia becomes the first country to pilot AI Judge for small claims disputes under 7000 euros
3. 2021 UNESCO adopts the recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence including transparency in justice
4. 2023 European union proposes the AI act restricting AI in high risk uses, including judicial making

- Hao, Karen. "An AI System Used by the US Courts Was Supposed to Be Fairer Than Judges." MIT Technology Review, 17 June 2019.
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- European Commission. Artificial Intelligence Act Proposal. 2023.
- Simonite, Tom. "Estonia Is Building a Robot Judge." WIRED, 26 March 2019.