



Joint fairness assessment method

An expert-led, deliberative audit informed by a quantitative bias scan

NGO Algorithm Audit

Mar 3rd 2023

Overview of Algorithm Audit's submission

1. Joint fairness assessment method

Quantitative component

Qualitative component

2. Case study

Normative advice of audit commission for BERT-based disinformation classifier on Twitter data

3. Conclusion



Algorithm Audit is registered as a Dutch non-profit organisation and engages in the international debate on AI ethics as an independent knowledge platform

Work of NGO Algorithm Audit



Audit commissions

Advising on ethical issues emerging in concrete algorithmic practices



Technical tooling

Implementing and testing technical tools to detect and mitigate bias



Advocacy

Contributing to public debate on responsible use of algorithms



Knowledge sharing

Sharing techno-ethical insights with society, policy makers and others

Supported by

European
Artificial Intelligence
& Society Fund

NL AI Coalition

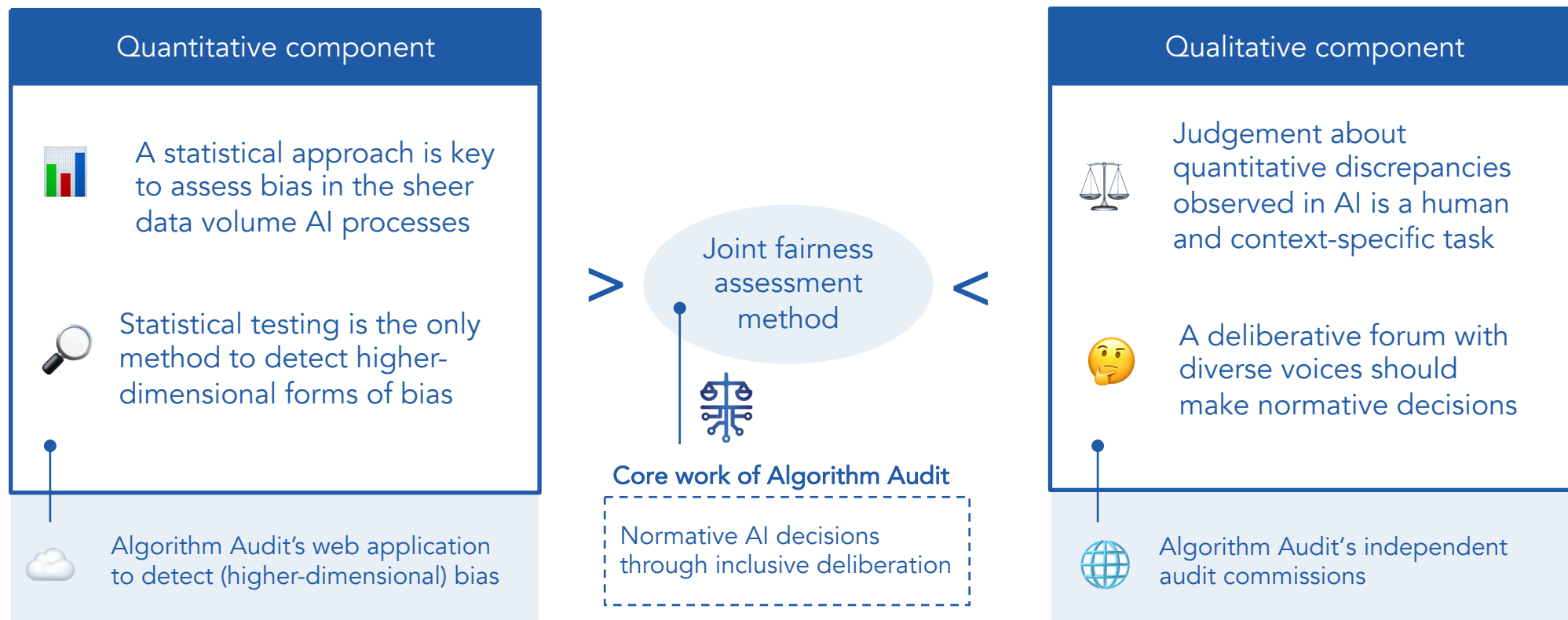
SIDNfonds



1. Joint fairness assessment method

2. Case study
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Human interpretation and statistical testing are indispensable to assess algorithmic fairness



Qualitative component: Algorithm Audit forms audit commissions that give normative advice on issues that arise in concrete use cases of algorithmic systems

A diverse audit commission...

- Expert-led
- Deliberative
- Multi-disciplinary
- Context-specific

...consisting of:

- **Civil society** organizations working on AI
- **Journalists** specialized in AI
- Academic AI **experts**
- Subject matter **experts**



Result

Publicly available normative advice with best-practices published on our website

To bring abstract principles...

Legal principles:

- Non-discrimination
- Equal treatment

Ethical principles:

- Preventing harmful impact
- Data stewardship

...to concrete AI practice

Quantitative notions:

- Proxy discrimination
- Fairness metrics
- Demographic parity
- Correlations

Quantitative component: Algorithm Audit's unsupervised machine learning bias scan tool allows to detect higher-dimensional forms of bias

Input bias scan tool



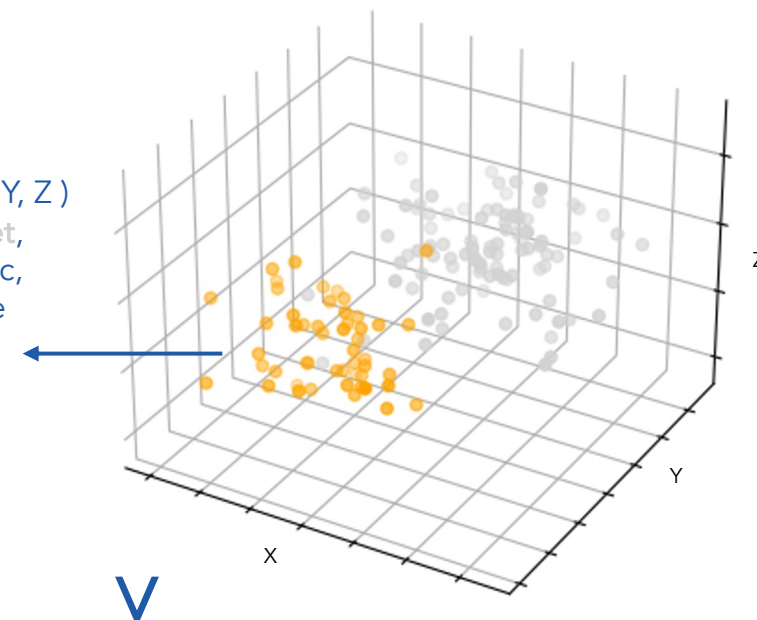
Available as a web application on our [website](#).

Binary AI classifier predictions				
feat_1	...	feat_n	predicted label	ground truth label
10	...	0.1	0	1
20	...	0.2	1	1
30	...	0.3	0	0



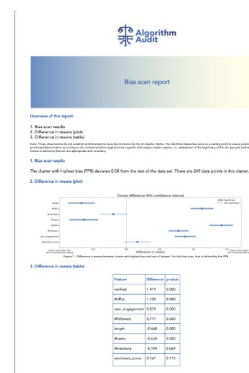
Output bias scan tool

Statistically significant deviating **cluster** (here defined by features X, Y, Z) compared to the **rest of the data set**, in terms of a pre-defined bias metric, e.g., False Positive Rate (FPR), False Negative Rate (FNR)



To inform evaluation by human experts

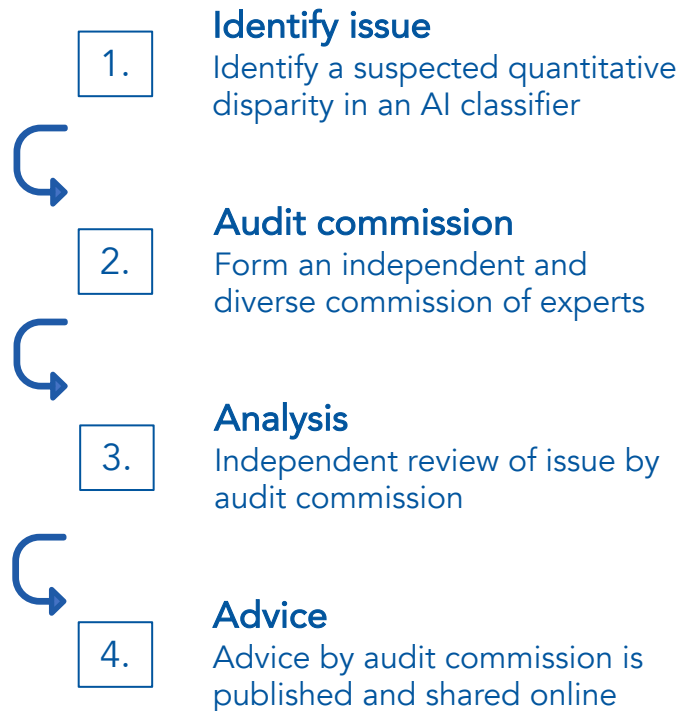
Automated bias testing process



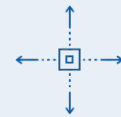
¹ Misztal, Indurkya, Bias-Aware Hierarchical Clustering for detecting the discriminated groups of users in recommendation systems, *Information Processing and Management* (2021)

Bringing together the quantitative and qualitative reasoning paradigm to assess AI fairness

Evaluation by human experts



Machine learning-driven bias detection tool



Scalable

Machine learning approach to detect algorithmic bias in all types of binary AI classifiers



Unsupervised bias detection

No protected user characteristics needed



Detects complex bias

Identifies unfairly treated groups characterized by mixture of features, detects intersectional bias



Accessible

Model-agnostic, open-source web application, easy to use for the entire AI auditing community, e.g., journalists, data scientists, policy makers etc.



1. Joint fairness assessment method
- 2. Case study**
3. Conclusion

Case study: With help of our bias scan tool, an audit commission provides normative guidance for a BERT-based disinformation classifier on Twitter data¹

Expert-led, deliberative audit commission

Academic AI experts



Anne Meuwese,
Professor in Public Law
& AI, Leiden University



Raphaële Xenidis,
Assistant Professor in
EU law, Sciences Po



Hinda Haned, Professor in
Responsible Data Science,
University of Amsterdam



Aileen Nielsen,
Fellow in Law &
Tech, ETH Zürich

Civil society organizations



DEMOS

Case study: BERT-based disinformation classifier



Use our bias scan tool to identify potentially unfairly treated groups², for two bias metrics:

- 1) False Positive Rate (FPR)
- 2) False Negative Rate (FNR)



Statistical testing to inform
deliberative assessment



Deliberation on normative questions³ by
audit commission

¹ Twitter1516 dataset

² Hierarchical Bias-Aware Clustering (HBAC), available as a web application on [Algorithm Audit's website](#)

³ See [problem statement](#)

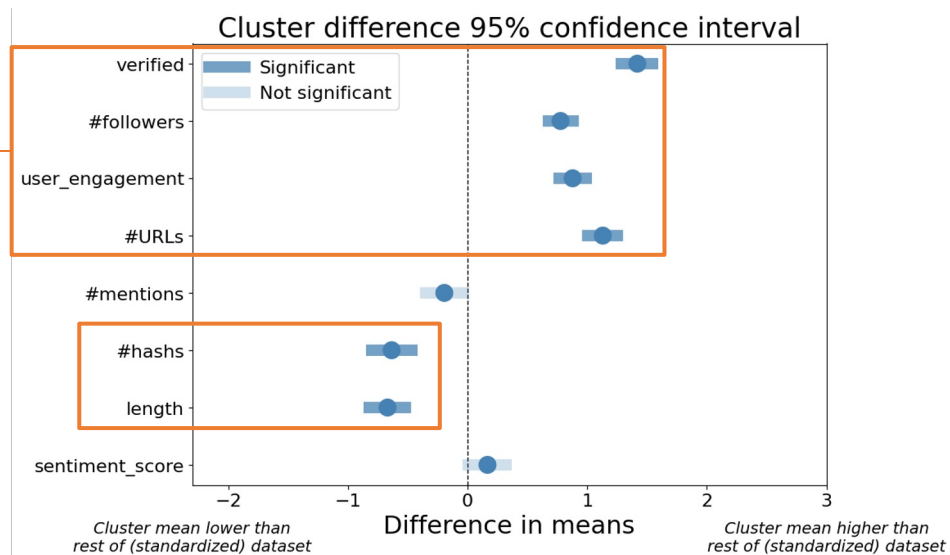
Output bias scan: Suspected disparities in the BERT-based Twitter disinformation classifier

FPR scan

Cluster with highest bias (FPR): 0.08
#elements in cluster with highest bias¹: 249

On average, users that:

- are **verified**, have higher **#followers**, **user engagement** and **#URLs**;
 - use less **#hashtags** and have lower **tweet length**
- have more true content classified as false (false positives).

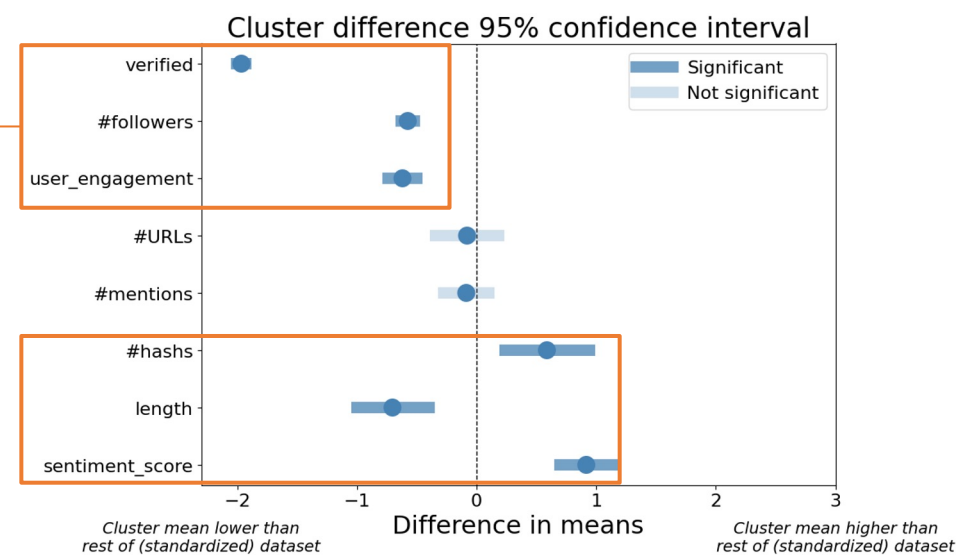


FNR scan

Cluster with highest bias (FNR): 0.13
#elements in cluster with highest bias¹: 46

On average, users that:

- use more **#hashtags** and have higher **sentiment score**;
 - are **non-verified**, have less **#followers**, **user engagement** and **tweet length**
- have more false content classified as true (false negatives).



Commission judgment: There is low risk of (higher-dimensional) proxy discrimination by the reviewed BERT-based disinformation classifier

Question to audit commission

1.

Is there an indication that one of the statistically significant features, or a combination of the features from Slide 10 are critically linked to one or multiple protected grounds?

2.

In the context of disinformation detection, is it as harmful to classify true content as false (false positive, FP) as false content as true (false negative, FN)?

Compiled answer

No, the audit commission considers none of the features critically linked to protected grounds, as defined in Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights. [Read more...](#)

Although both FPs and FNs are considering to be harmful, the majority view of the audit commission is that it is more harmful to classify true content as false (false positives). [Read more...](#)

Audit commission



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Read the full advice [here](#)

Commission judgment: The observed difference in treatment can be justified, if certain conditions apply

Question to audit commission

3.

For a specific cluster of people, is it justifiable to have true content classified as false 8 percentage points more often? For a specific cluster of people, is it justifiable to have false content classified as true 13 percentage points more often?

4.

Is it justifiable that the disinformation classification algorithm is too harsh towards users with verified profile, more #followers and higher user engagement and too lenient towards users with non-verified profile, less #followers and lower user engagement?

Compiled answer

The audit commission does not consider these discrepancies unjustified. There is no decisive reason why these rates would be too high, although certain conditions apply. [Read more...](#)

The audit commission believes that this particular difference in treatment can be justified, if certain conditions apply, such as adequate recourse, documentation and communication mechanisms. [Read more...](#)

Audit commission



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Read the full
advice [here](#)



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Approach summary: Combining the power of data-driven bias testing with context-sensitive human evaluation

Key strengths of our approach



Joint approach

Bridging the quantitative and qualitative reasoning paradigm



Unsupervised machine learning

Unsupervised machine learning to automatically detect complex forms of bias that go beyond established protected grounds



Deliberative

Deliberative, expert-led assessment by diverse AI policy professionals



Case repository

Over time a case repository emerges from which data scientists and public authorities can distill 'techno-ethical' best-practices



Source code can be found on [GitHub](#)



All of Algorithm Audit's case studies can be found on our [website](#)

This project is a collective effort of AI experts from a wide range of professional backgrounds

Algorithm Audit's bias scan tool team



Jurriaan Parie, Trustworthy AI consultant, Deloitte



Ariën Voogt, PhD-candidate in Philosophy, Protestant Theological University of Amsterdam



Joel Persson, PhD-candidate in Applied Data Science, ETH Zürich

20+ endorsements from various parts of the AI auditing community

Journalism

- Gabriel Geiger, Investigative Reporter Algorithms and Automated Decision-Making at Lighthouse Reports

Civil society organisations

- [Maldita](#), an independent journalistic platform focused on the control of disinformation and public discourse through fact-checking and data journalism techniques
- [Demos](#), Britain's leading cross-party think-tank
- [NLAIIC](#), The Netherlands AI Coalition
- [Progressive Café](#), public platform of young intellectuals, represented by Kiza Magendane
- [Dutch AI Ethics Community](#), represented by Samaa Mohammad
- Simone Maria Parazzoli, Fellow at the OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI)

Industry

- Selma Muhammad, Trustworthy AI consultant at Deloitte
- Laurens van der Maas, Data Scientist at Amazon Web Services
- Xiaoming op de Hoek, Data Scientist at Rabobank
- Jan Overgoor, Data Scientist at SPAN
- Dasha Simons, Trustworthy AI consultant at IBM

Academia

- Anne Meuwese, Professor in Public Law & AI at Leiden University
- Hinda Haned, Professor in Data Science at University of Amsterdam
- Raphaële Xenidis, Associate Professor in EU law at Sciences Po Paris
- Aileen Nielsen, Fellow in Law&Tech at ETH Zürich
- Marlies van Eck, Assistant Professor in Administrative Law & AI at Radboud University
- Ola Al Khatib, PhD-researcher in the legal regulation of algorithmic decision-making at Utrecht University
- Vahid Niamadpour, PhD-candidate in Applied Linguistics at Leiden University
- Floris Holstege, PhD-candidate in Explainable Machine Learning at University of Amsterdam



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<https://github.com/NGO-Algorithm-Audit>

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