## Results: Overview This section presents the findings from our integrative review, which sought to explore the intersection of disability and artificial intelligence (AI), with a focus on challenges, barriers, and opportunities for AI applications in improving the lives of persons with disabilities (PWD). Through thematic analysis of diverse sources, including literature reviews, observational studies, user feedback, and qualitative coding of Reddit data, three overarching themes emerged: Benefits & Potential, Challenges, and Future Recommendations.

## Benefits and Potential

**Diagnostic Improvement**

Across many developments, artificial intelligence shows great promise in its potential to improve the lives of PWD. AI has many applications in the realm of diagnosis. AI models can extract and process patient data, using state-of-the-art machine learning algorithms such as decision trees, support vector machines, and deep learning to expedite and improve the accuracy of diagnosis. Through its advanced pattern-finding abilities, AI is able to integrate many data sources at once and even discover new correlations. For example, Natural Language Processing, a technique used to process human language, can be used to identify speech patterns that may indicate the presence of an intellectual disability. **other examples here? Reference** found that AI has been documented in the successful(?) diagnosis multiple sclerosis (MS), developmental disorders, and autism, all of which can be signficantly disabling. Prognosis and prediction of disability also looks to be promising use cases of AI technology, having shown to predict the risk of reading disabilities among students and the liklihood that injuries become chronic (**references below)**.

**brain imaging**

**Treatment through Chatbots**

Beyond diagnosis, AI has many applications in assistive technologies to help PWD manage symptoms, find greater accessibility, and improve their quality of life. Conversational agents, otherwise known as chatbots, are one of the most well-known AI technologies and show great promise for a number of disabilities. Chatbots are easily accessible and cost-effective, and can provide a variety of services to disabling users (8). \_\_\_ found that a chatbot built for ADHD management to be more effective at improving \_\_\_ than a textbook offering the same techniques. Deafness, another condition that can be disabling, may benefit from the use of chatbot sign language through integrated video capabilities (ref), or through offering real-time captions of live audio (3). As well, chatbots that are developed with TTS and STT capabilities have potential to be (**what kind of)** aids to users with visual impairments and blindness. (10) found benefit to users with intellectual disabilities to improve communication and social skills through chatbot-integrated training. Chatbots could also potentially (**in the future)** provide cognitive assistence to those with intellectual disabilities, dementia, or other disorders that affect cognitive function (6), or integrate facial recognition technology with therapies to help identify emotions in disabled users (3). In the domain of psychiatric disorders, chatbots providing cognitive-behavioural therapy have been shown to improve user-reported measures of psychological well-being anxiety, depression, or perceived stress compared to controls across a range of disorders. As well, they show an advantage in increasing adherance to therapy (8).

Many deaf children do not have access to spoken language from birth and this impacts their ability to develop literacy skills(Explainable AI for all - A roadmap for inclusive XAI for people with cognitive disabilities). Normally babies learn a language orally first and then visually(Explainable AI for all - A roadmap for inclusive XAI for people with cognitive disabilities).

Processing written text can be more challenging if you have never heard of that spoken language(Explainable AI for all - A roadmap for inclusive XAI for people with cognitive disabilities). Phonological awareness (the connection between written and auditory language) is not established for those who have never had hearing since birth(Explainable AI for all - A roadmap for inclusive XAI for people with cognitive disabilities). There is also a delay in language acquisition for this population as well which can impact capability to pick up literacy(Explainable AI for all - A roadmap for inclusive XAI for people with cognitive disabilities).

For example, ASL has different grammar than written language. ASL is non-linear and spatial for example which differs significantly from English(Explainable AI for all - A roadmap for inclusive XAI for people with cognitive disabilities).

Limited exposure to spoken language can also lead to smaller vocabularies. Limiting good literacy acquisition (Explainable AI for all - A roadmap for inclusive XAI for people with cognitive disabilities).

These reasons are why video signing is recommended to form XAI (responsible and inclusive AI) (Explainable AI for all - A roadmap for inclusive XAI for people with cognitive disabilities)..

There are projects working on this problem like SignGuru (Explainable AI for all - A roadmap for inclusive XAI for people with cognitive disabilities).  
  
**Robotics, Wearables, and Virtual Assistants**

Outside of empowering diagnosis and treatment, there is a range of encouraging developments in technology that leverages AI to assist disabled individuals. AI can be integrated into wheelchairs and other mobility devices to improve navigation and control features (11), or be integrated into robotics to help disabled people with everday tasks, provide support, and offer companionship (3). Virtual assistants with AI advancements can help reduce access barriers to everyday tasks like telecommunications, transmitting messages to caregivers, and coordinating grocery deliveries. Developments in virtual reality and wearable devices may offer exciting new support for rehabilitation and exercise in disabled individuals (11).

**Communication**

In disabilities that affect communication and language, technology that leverages AI has a range of applications. For deaf individuals, AI-enhanced real-time captioning can generate live captions to translate audio, and for those with an intellectual disability that affects language abilities, AAC (Augmentative and alternative communication) devices can aid with verbal communication through text-to-speech capabilities and visual representations of phrases, words, and concepts (3). As well, AI systems built for facial recognition can help the intellectually disabled identify, intepret, understand and communicate their feelings in ways they may otherwise struggle with. In disabilities that impact reading and writing such as dyslexia or dysgraphia, text analysis systems can aid them through visual illustration, focused highlighting, intelligent spelling, grammar correction, and word or phrase suggestions (3).

**Education & Workplace**

AI boasts the ability to create custom-tailored, adaptable, and personalized learning plans for those with learning disabilities (3). This AI-powered educational tool has been shown to increase engagement and motivation to learn in students when compared with conventional learning approaches (10).

**Social Benefit**

Across its range of benefits, AI technology has the power to help disabled individuals overcome barriers and find greater health equity and inclusion in society. AI technology could facilitate participation in community through training social skills (10), allow accessibility to information when used to facilitate disabilities that affect communication and hearing (4), and create workplaces that are more inclusive and accessible through personalized assistive technologies (17), combat cost-based service inaccessibility through offering at-home therapy solutions (13), and through improving accessibility, reduce social disaparities that result from technology being otherwise unusable to certain disabled populations (6).

## Challenges, Risks, and Barriers

Although offering hope to benefit those with disabilities, artificial Intelligence is still a relatively young field. Without deliberate attention to the design of technologies that integrate it, AI runs the risk of perpetuating bias, discrimination, and disparities.

**Inaccessibility of Technology**

AI technology available to the general public may leave behind users of different disabilities if it does not accommodate their uniqueness. For example, AI systems that use natural language processing (NLP) to understand text inputs from users may provide less accurate results for those with cognitive or intellectual disabilities (6),and automated speech recognition systems may function poorly for those with speech impairments (6). Those with conditions that affect their facial features, body morphology, or motor movements may run into issues with systems that use this data to function, such as with gesture recognition systems and facial analysis software. Furthermore, photo analysis AI may not be accessible to those with tremors or visual impairment who struggle to take quality photos that the system is designed for.

Though chatbots show promise to help persons with disabilities, those with cognitive, communication, and coordination barriers may face challenges that limit their ability to navigate them (**Explainable AI for all - A roadmap for inclusive XAI for people with cognitive disabilities**). The World Health Organization(WHO)’s W3C Web Accessibility Initiative highlights cognitive disability barriers to using technology: memory, executive functions, reasoning, attention, language, knowledge and behavior (**Explainable AI for all - A roadmap for inclusive XAI for people with cognitive disabilities**). These barriers can be related to cognitive ability domains: 1) language, communication, and auditory reception 2) reasoning, ideation, and cognitive speed 3) memory and the ability to learn 4) visual perception and 5) knowledge and achievement(**Explainable AI for all - A roadmap for inclusive XAI for people with cognitive disabilities**). These categories can show a wide array of areas that can limit individuals with a cognitive disability in accessing healthcare and using tools such as AI chatbots to help increase access to health resources. Ultimately these categories can impact an individual’s literacy level when interacting with AI, AI chatbots and chatbots(**Explainable AI for all - A roadmap for inclusive XAI for people with cognitive disabilities**).

**Biases in AI**

In their development, AI models are trained on data to help them understand, process, and generate content. If this training data lacks the diversity that is exemplified by PWD, AI models can run the risk perpetuating bias against the demographic (3, 15, 6). AI systems that are trained on aggegrated training metrics that don't adequately represent PWD can lead to inaccurate responses or generalizations (6). (19) show how different conceptualizations of disability can lead to highly distinct AI technologies with divergent biases, ideologies, and implications. \_\_\_ demonstrated how popular AI large language models (LLMs) ChatGPT and Gemini give responses that underestimate the prevalence of disability in the general population, and was more likely to describe those with disabilities in unfavorable language. These findings suggest bias in the training data and design of these systems, and run the risk of perpetuating inequalities in society and medical settings. Unrepresentative AI design and training data can also discriminate PWD by erroneously detecting them as anomalies, as in the case of AI bot-detection systems labelling disabled users as outliers due to their inability to solve puzzles like CAPTCHAs with a response time that the algorithm percieves as "human" (6) (14).

Bias and discrimination from AI is particularly consequential in how it can manifest in the workplace. The increasingly popular trend of online hiring and recruitment algorithms may mean that by default disclude certain disabilities if they lack accessibility options. These algorithms may also select for a narrow criteria that disabled people are less likely to fall under, neglecting other qualifying factors. As well, they may select against writing styles that may vary in across disabilities, potentially even detecting their job applications as spam (14). As jobs become more automated due to advancements in AI, employees with disability may be disproportionately negatively impacted due to their overrepresentation in jobs that are more easily automated (17).

**Data Privacy**

AI's reliance on user data to learn and improve poses a particular risk to disabled users, who may share sensitive personal health information (11) and who may be more easily identifiable in datasets due to having unique identifiers associated with the barriers they face in areas like work experience and education (17). If compromised, their sensitive data may then be at risk of the consequences of data breaches or misuse by companies (15). Because of the vulnerabilities that PWD face with their data, it is crucial that data privacy and security is prioritized in the design and development of AI systems (3**).**

# Recommendations for Inclusive AI

**The Social Model of Disability**

At the root of disability is how it is defined, and in turn, how its definition can shape action and policy. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) defines disability in accordance with the social model of disability, which understands disability as an interaction effect between individuals and their environment, and how this interaction can either obstruct or empower their involvement and participation in society. However, within AI research there is a lack of use of this social model of disability. **contrast with medical model.** Whereas the Medical Model of disability views impairment as an individual struggle that needs to be fixed for the individual to fit societal bodily norms( **Implications for public health research of models and theories of disability: a scoping study and evidence synthesis**). Instead of the environment accommodating this difference, such as in the Social Model of Disability, instead the Medical Model of disability focuses on changing the individual, such as providing a lung transplant for an individual with a lung disability(**Implications for public health research of models and theories of disability: a scoping study and evidence synthesis**). The adoption of the social model of disability can help set a framework in the design phase of AI technology which shifts the burden away from disability as a medical diagnosis, instead being an aspect of human diversity that inclusive design can accommodate and support (14).

**Governmental Oversight**

Encouraging governments to uphold the human rights of those with disability is another way that the future of AI can promote inclusivity, reduce bias, and improve accessibility, rather than diminish it. An example of this is Digital Nations, an international forum that includes Canada amongst 10 countries with the commitment of steering new technologies in a way that improve citizens' lives. Among its core principles are the fostering of digital inclusion and accessibility, which help inform Canada's policies around AI development such in its Directive on Automated Decision-Making and in Digital Charter Implementation Act. Within the rapidly developing realm of AI technology, it is crucial that governmental entities across the world work to discuss, regulate, and enforce design principles that can help accomodate and support those with disabilities (17). (3) recommends that disability advocacy groups advocate for the creation and enforcement of government policies and regulations to help ensure that AI upholds the human rights and social equity of those with disabilities.

**Inclusive & Ethical Design**

On the corporate and business level, promoting stakeholder interest in the creation and implementation of inclusive and fair AI systems can help to offset potential biases that impact disabled individuals. Executives, human resource workers, and IT professionals can consider whether an AI system used in the workplace matches organizational values, evaluate its outcomes, and investigate its training data (14).

In the design of chatbots or self-management programs, it is essential to address the various barriers of disabilities by tailoring tools to different disability types. This means creating a feature to identify the type of disability of the user and adapt their output to align with their needs. Creating explainable artificial intelligence (XAI) systems that transparently convey information to the user about what it is doing, how it is doing it, and why, can significantly improve inclusivity of users. XAI must also accommodate deaf and blind populations by incorporating accessible mediums for effective communication (**Explainable AI for All: A Roadmap for Inclusive XAI for People with Cognitive Disabilities**).

User-centered design is a core principle that can help systems align with the diversity of disability and promote inclusivity. User-centered design puts users at the center of product design and development. In the context of AI and disability, this involves including disabled individuals from the early stages research and design, iteratively incorporating their feedback, and testing the system with the demographic (1). One way to support this process is to have interdisciplinary collaboration between AI researchers, disability experts, and disabled individuals throughout AI development (14, 17, 11).By focusing on user-centered design, AI systems may be able to mitigate bias, improve accessibility, and reduce potential discrimination for disabled people.

By collaborating with disabled individuals throughout the design process, major issues in AI tech such as algorithmic bias have an improved potential to be addressed. Algorithmic bias, such as is shown in ChatGPT and Gemini (**ref)** , can happen as a result of AI models being trained off data that does not sufficiently include disability and the diversity it represents. To address this, (4) proposes that LLM models should be trained on reweighted datasets to deliberately consider sensitive demographics that may be affected by bias. Similarly, to help ensure that AI models are more balanced and representative, (13) suggests artificially inflating the number of samples for commonly underrepresented classes of people. And while this may be an effective measure, it shines a light on the need for strong encyption protocols to protect the data of those with disabilities both if it is used for AI training or if used during AI technology use (1). Those with disabilities may be more vulnerable to data-related exploitation (11), and it is essential to protect their data through compliance with national regulations such as HIPAA in the United States, or Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (6).

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# Discussion

### We identified 3 major areas that AI technology can help to improve the lives of persons with disabilities: Accessibility, health outcomes, and integration into community.

## Accessibility

Canada's Disability Action Plan defines accessibility as "the degree to which a product, service, program or environment is available to be accessed or used by all". Those with disabilities can have unique challenges with day-to-day accessibility, instead running into a spectrum of barriers that hinder their full and equal participation in society. Addressing accessibility involves considering the context of the resource, identifying barriers to its use, and understanding that accessibility improves as these barriers are mitigated. The Accessible Canada Act lists 7 major priorities in improving accessibility for Canadians:

1. employment
2. the built environment
3. information and communication technologies
4. communication (other than information and communication technologies)
5. the procurement of goods, services, and facilities
6. the design and delivery of programs and services
7. transportation

Our literature review reveals a wide array of AI technology and directions for future AI development which may be able to help address key areas of Canada's accessibility priorities:

## Employment

Employment opportunities for PWD in British Columbia are constrained by a lack of inclusive workplace cultures, further limiting financial independence (Bridging the Gap – Report on Disability Inclusion in Canadian Workplaces). Data from Stats Canada (2017) highlight additional barriers, including lack of transportation, limited educational opportunities, and inadequate workplace accommodations.

Adopting inclusive design principles is critical to creating workplaces that exceed accessibility standards (**Bridging the Gap – Report on Disability Inclusion in Canadian Workplaces**). Recommendations include fostering leaders who champion accessibility and implementing governance plans to ensure fair use of technology in hiring (**Recruitment AI has a Disability Problem**).

AI can help create inclusive workplaces through personalized assistive technologies by providing automated document formatting, real-time communication support, and adaptive interface customization. These technologies can enable independent task completion, streamline workflow management, and facilitate more effective collaboration between team members.

AI can help develop workplace competencies through personalized training modules,

# maintain workplace productivity through automated task assistance, environmental control systems, and communication support tools.

## Information and Communication Technologies

# AI shows strong potential in its ability to help persons with disabilities engage seamlessly with information and communication technologies. By encouraging both policy and stakeholder interest to support the design of technologies that are inclusive, bias-controlling, and non-discriminatory, these technologies can help serve a wide spectrum of disabilities across populations. Adopting user-centered design and implementing AI capabilities can allow systems to adapt their interface and features to accommodate a range of impairments and personal preferences. For example, a business creating a mobile application for ordering groceries may expand their market and user-base by implementing user-centered options that allow for various engagement needs. The application may include options for the visually impaired with speech-to-text and text-to-speech capabilities, gesture or expression-based interaction for those with motor impairments, or an interactive chatbot that can assist with the process of ordering groceries for those with cognitive disabilities.

-chatbots relatively inexpensive, accessible due to potential free/low cost and from home

## Communication (Other than ICT)

# AI can address numerous communication barriers faced by those with disabilities. For the deaf and hearing impaired, systems that can understand and translate this into speech could open up the potential for reduced communication barriers with those who do not understand sign language. Those with disabilities that affect their emotional processing may better be able to understand and convey their emotional state to others with the use of AI that can interpret facial expression or analyze their text for pertinent patterns. Or, if an intellectual disability makes verbal communication a challenge for an individual, an augmentative and alternative communication device may help infer their desired message with the help of symbol-based and text-to-speech capabilities.

Intellectual Disabilities: Improving education quality through competency-based teaching aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can address communication barriers (Intellectual Disability and Technology: An Artificial Intelligence Perspective and Framework).

1. Hearing Loss: Hearing-impaired individuals often require intermediaries for effective chatbot use. Enhanced accessibility features, such as sign language video support, can significantly improve interaction (Designing Accessible Chatbots for Deaf People).

## Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

The resources required by persons with disabilities (PWD) vary by subgroup but generally include healthcare, specialized services, and rehabilitation. These resources improve health outcomes and promote independence (A Disability-Inclusive Healthcare-to-Well-Being Translational Science Framework). Financial independence, supported by employment or stable income, plays a critical role in achieving autonomy (Bridging the Gap – Report on Disability Inclusion in Canadian Workplaces).

Experts emphasize the importance of well-being self-management programs—both online and in-person—that are accessible and designed to transition PWD from dependence to self-sufficiency (A Disability-Inclusive Healthcare-to-Well-Being Translational Science Framework).

### AI offers a new and exciting potential for effective at-home management of disabilities. Chatbot-based therapies help lower the barriers of cost and transportation and can empower disabled users to rehabilitate through technologies that adapt to their needs.

Through AI helping to improve technological accessibility, disabled users can become more independent to use web and mobile-based options for connecting them to services like health appointments, transportation, and grocery delivery. Technology like virtual assistants can further assist those with disabilities in connecting to the goods and services they need.

Virtual communities are another solution, addressing needs such as chronic disease management, mental health support, and education. Proposals to develop a disability wikibase could centralize data across advocacy groups and organizations, creating evidence-based platforms for policy and self-sufficiency (A Virtual Community for Disability Advocacy).

A strategic framework has been proposed to better integrate local communities with healthcare and well-being services, reducing gaps in accessibility (A Disability-Inclusive Healthcare-to-Well-Being Translational Science Framework).

AI and Technology: AI offers personalized assistance and real-time adaptation to connect PWD with healthcare and well-being programs. This includes tools for diagnosis, support systems, and assistive technologies (Disability Ethics and Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence; Intellectual Disability and Technology: An Artificial Intelligence Perspective and Framework).

## Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

educational programs

-adaptive, custom

adaptable home management

-if made in interdiscplinary teams, user-centered design, responsive interfaces

bias-controlled & multi-interface AI (LLMs) (public available to all)

-can serve and uplift PWD equally, LLM power to make info accessible and automate task

-chatbots relatively inexpensive, accessible due to potential free/low cost and from home

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### How to increase accessibility to these resources? Experts have noted that well-being self-management programs (online and in person) that are easily accessible are needed(A Disability-Inclusive Healthcare-to-Well-Being Science Framework ). Specifically to help aid individuals in these populations from being dependents to being self-sufficient( A Disability-Inclusive Healthcare-to-Well-Being Science Framework). A proposed strategy plan offers a framework for local communities to connect PWD individuals' transition to well-being services and healthcare(A Disability-Inclusive Healthcare-to-Well-Being Science Framework). Virtual communities have been used in many communities to address chronic disease management, education and mental health(Disability Wikibase). There have been suggestions to create a disability wikibase to interpret disability data across advocacy groups, individuals and organizations of people to create a repository for evidence-based policy to create effective platforms to support self-sufficiency in disabled populations and those with PWD status(Disability wikibase). Accessible health promotion programs to help ensure inclusion of persons of disability have been traditionally implemented by the Inclusive Health Coalitions(IHCs) in community planning. These programs involve multiple levels of stakeholders, it has been proposed for these groups to expand to focus on healthcare to well-being transitions. To help encourage autonomy.

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### For workplace accessibility, adopting an inclusive design was suggested to meet and exceed accessibility standards(DIBC). (What are these standards?) And also more leaders who can permeate these standards( ). Individuals with intellectual disabilities can overcome communication barriers by improving the quality of education with a teaching model focused on competency-based knowledge that is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) created by the United Nations( ). Individuals with hearing loss require an intermediary for using a chatbot (expand on this using LIS study). AI has emerged to help offer personalised assistance and real-time adaption to create more connectivity between persons with disability that may require more personalization to connect with healthcare and well-being programs(Disability Ethics & Education in the Age of Artifical Intelligence\_Identifying Ability Bias). Numerous ideas have been postulated as to how AI can be used to aid persons with disabilities, one idea is to help diagnose disabilities( Intellectual Disability & Tech\_An Artifical Intelligence Perspective & Framework ). ADHD is a diagnosis under mental health that can lead to a disability, chatbots have been found to be helpful in increasing accessibility to CBT treatment to improve attention deficit symptoms, characteristic of ADHD. These chatbots are mobile-based ( Intellectual Disability & Tech\_An Artifical Intelligence Perspective & Framework).

### **Health Outcomes**

### Health outcomes, including improvements in physical, mental, and emotional health, reflect the direct impact of AI technologies on well-being. AI-based tools such as conversational agents and personalized health management systems have shown measurable benefits. For example, Jang et al. (2021) highlighted significant reductions in ADHD symptoms, including impulsivity and hyperactivity, among users of an AI-driven psychoeducation chatbot​.

### AI-powered assistive devices have also been effective in rehabilitation and therapy. Almufareh et al. (2023) reported on AI tools designed to support cognitive assessments and personalized therapy, enabling better patient outcomes through tailored interventions​. Furthermore, Olawade et al. (2025) outlined the potential of AI-enabled robotics and multimodal systems in providing personalized care and improving functional independence among people with disabilities​.

### **User Satisfaction**

### User satisfaction is a key outcome driven by accessibility, usability, and thoughtful design in AI interventions. Programs designed with user-centered approaches ensure that individuals, particularly those with disabilities, can engage with technologies effectively and intuitively. For instance, Almufareh et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of explainability and user-friendliness in AI systems, which fosters trust and engagement among users​.

### In a study evaluating chatbots for ADHD management, Jang et al. (2021) reported high satisfaction rates due to features like daily check-ins, mindfulness training, and empathy-driven responses, which users found supportive in managing symptoms​. Similarly, Singh et al. (2023) demonstrated how a speech-to-text-enabled chatbot improved accessibility and usability for visually impaired users, underscoring the value of inclusive design in driving user satisfaction​

# **Feeling of Community** According to the social disability model, disability is defined by its ability to empower or hinder an individual's capability to participate in society. Define feeling of community and its significance--- reference health population textbook from Dr.Bruce Lanphear's class (refer to textbook you sent Claire). (look at evaluation chart to get citations) Generally: Individuals that are different from the common population or part of a community become ostracized, this also specifically is seen in animals when one is sick. This pattern in nature is reflected in humans and is an issue that is called stigma, that is a barrier for individuals identifying as disabled face in seeking a feeling of community(Dr.Geoffry Rose). Community can be a resource, it is an outcome we used to evaluate the intervention of AI and AI chatbots in particular and if it reduces barriers to community. Barriers to community: -Lack of coordination between healthcare and community programs. -Limited accessibility of technology and resources. -Social skill development issues for people with intellectual disabilities. How AI addresses these barriers to community: -Virtual advocacy communities to empower disability rights. -Tools that connect PWD with healthcare and well-being programs. -Inclusive AI systems designed through collaboration with disability groups. How this outcome can be measured in the future: Metrics might include participation rates, perceived belonging, access to shared resources, or self-reported well-being improvements. Future Directions for Development

1.<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/research/indicators-united-nations-convention/article-19.html>

Conclusions  
  
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