



Cognitive Freedom Coalition

COGNITIVE FREEDOM / AUDIENCE DOSSIER

Public Dossier

A Practical Guide to Cognitive Freedom, Mental Privacy and Community
Action

Prepared for The Public

Your Mind and Your Freedom

This paper examines the possibility that future technologies could analyze or influence aspects of human thought and behavior, and the protections needed to prevent misuse.

Cognitive Freedom begins with a simple idea: your mental life matters. Your thoughts, attention, memories, beliefs and choices should not become someone else's property or a means of coercion. Cognitive Freedom Coalition works to prepare protections for those interests as technology advances.

Why This Concerns Everyone

Neurotechnology may help people communicate, recover function or receive care. It can also raise questions about who collects intimate data, what they infer from it and whether people can freely say no. Families, workers, students and communities have a place in that conversation. [4, 2]

Imagine a future device that helps you communicate or manage a demanding task, but also generates information about your attention or reactions. You should be able to understand its purpose, choose what to share and ask how that information might affect you. The Coalition works to make those choices meaningful.

You Have a Place in the Conversation

You do not need a neuroscience degree to ask who controls a technology, who benefits and whether people can refuse it. Public participation should shape the questions institutions ask, especially where decisions could affect work, education, health or access to services.

- Learn the difference between a report, a hypothesis, a documented event and a confirmed finding.
- Protect private information and obtain permission before sharing another person's story.
- Support clear complaint routes, independent oversight and meaningful consent in research and technology.

This dossier offers background, a guide to the public record and practical ways to participate. The aim is a society that can benefit from innovation while protecting the freedom to think and choose for oneself.

What Cognitive Freedom Protects

Cognitive Freedom is the principle that a person's thoughts, mental processes and inner life deserve protection. Cognitive Liberty expresses the freedom to make meaningful choices about that mental life. These ideas connect privacy, self-direction and consent with the conditions people need to think freely.

Six Interests That Belong Together

Freedom of thought. People need room to form beliefs, reflect, imagine, disagree and change their minds without coercive interference. The value extends beyond what a person chooses to say publicly.

Mental privacy. Intimate information about mental life deserves protection, including inferences generated by a system rather than information deliberately supplied by a person.

Cognitive Autonomy. People should retain meaningful agency over decisions affecting their own mental life. A convenient service should not make manipulation or dependence an unavoidable condition of participation.

Neural data protection. Recording, processing, retention and sharing each create responsibilities. Safeguards should follow sensitive information through its lifecycle, including derived profiles and models.

Human dignity. A person is more than a score, prediction or research record. Institutions should treat uncertainty and difference fairly rather than reduce a person's worth to an automated classification.

Informed consent. A meaningful choice requires understandable information, an ability to refuse and a clear account of what participation or withdrawal will mean.

A Wider Conversation

UNESCO and the OECD address ethical governance of neurotechnology. Existing human rights instruments also provide relevant protections. The Coalition contributes to this conversation by asking what institutions should prepare before future capabilities become commonplace. [1, 2, 7]

Our position is pro-progress and human-centered. Scientific advances should expand health, communication and human capability. Protections make those benefits more trustworthy by giving people a meaningful voice in how technologies affect them.

From Research to Future Safeguards

Communication and Human Capability

Willett and colleagues demonstrated attempted-speech decoding using an implanted brain-computer interface in a participant with paralysis. The work illustrates the value of restoring communication and the importance of user control over generated output. [6]

A future assistive system could become central to how a person speaks, works or participates in public life. Safeguards should address correction of errors, continuity of service, ownership of records and the ability to choose who receives the output. A person should not lose agency because they depend on a useful device.

Inference and Mental Privacy

Tang and colleagues reconstructed aspects of language meaning from fMRI recordings after extensive participant-specific training. Cooperation and controlled conditions mattered. This raises a concrete privacy question about how sensitive inferences might be handled as methods develop. [5]

If future systems infer intimate information from neural or related signals, a prediction could affect a person even when it is inaccurate. The Coalition proposes limits on consequential use, a right to contest an inference and a clear distinction between a measured signal and a conclusion about someone's mind.

Interfaces and Institutional Power

DARPA's N3 program funded research toward nonsurgical, bidirectional brain-machine interfaces. Published research objectives identify a direction of development, rather than establishing every proposed capability. [4]

If future interfaces become more accessible, the same capability could serve different purposes in a clinic, workplace or security setting. Consent, access controls and independent oversight must account for who holds power over the person using the system.

A Future-System Model

A future system might combine sensing, inference, a decision process and feedback or intervention. Each step creates a governance question: what is collected, what is inferred, what action follows, who authorizes it and how a person can stop or challenge it. A failure at any step could turn a helpful tool into a source of coercion or unfair treatment.

The Coalition proposes preparing safeguards around these decisions now. Define acceptable purposes, prohibited outcomes, responsibility for errors and routes to remedy. Technical validation should assess particular claims under stated conditions; policy should also address risks that remain uncertain without pretending the eventual mechanism is already known.

Everyday Choices and Mental Privacy

Ask What a Product Actually Does

A device may record a signal, while its software estimates something about you from that signal. Those are different steps. Ask which information is measured, which conclusions are inferred and what evidence supports the inference. A confident display or a precise-looking score can still be uncertain.

Consider a future learning tool that estimates when a student needs a break. It could support learning, but its value would change if the same estimate were used to label the student or limit opportunities. Purpose, access and consequences matter as much as the data itself.

Make Consent a Real Choice

Before agreeing to a new use, ask what participation involves, what benefit is expected and what happens if you decline. Find out whether the service offers an alternative, whether sharing is optional and whether withdrawal stops future collection. Ask separately about records already retained.

A choice can be difficult when an employer, school or care provider controls something you need. The Coalition proposes that institutions assess those pressures openly and provide a realistic alternative where participation is presented as voluntary.

Look Beyond the First Recipient

Ask whether information stays on the device or goes to a remote service. Who can see it? Can it be combined with other records, used to train a model, sold or transferred? How long is it kept? A privacy explanation should describe these uses in language a person can understand.

If a prediction affects an important decision, ask for the basis of that decision and a way to contest it. The Coalition supports meaningful human review, particularly when a system could mistake a temporary state, a disability or a difference between people for a judgment about their ability or character.

Keep a Useful Record

Save the information supplied before consent, the choices you made and any later notice of a change. If a concern arises, describe the event, the effect on you and the specific response you are seeking. Preserve original correspondence and ask for a named contact or case identifier.

Practical privacy begins with understandable information and accountable institutions. Individuals should not carry the entire burden of discovering hidden uses or correcting a system they cannot inspect.

A Constructive Public Voice

Ask for Protections You Can Explain

You do not need to resolve a scientific controversy to support meaningful consent, mental privacy or honest complaint handling. Ask public representatives how existing law addresses neural data and sensitive inferences, who can investigate a complaint and how people can seek review of a decision.

- Support independent oversight of research, procurement and use of technologies that could affect mental privacy or autonomy.
- Ask institutions to explain what data they collect, why they need it, who can access it and whether participation is optional.
- Support lawful whistleblower channels and protections against retaliation for good-faith reporting.
- Encourage public hearings and plain-language information about emerging technology, its benefits and its risks.

A Short Message to a Representative

I am asking your office to support Cognitive Freedom and mental privacy as neurotechnology develops. Please explain which safeguards protect neural data and sensitive mental inferences, how people can report suspected misuse, and which independent body can review those concerns. I would welcome a written response about oversight, informed consent and access to remedy.

Share Information Responsibly

Share the original source and explain what it establishes. A patent is a description of a claimed invention. A research program has goals and results that may differ. A person's account is testimony that deserves respectful handling. Keeping these distinctions clear makes public discussion more useful.

Avoid sharing names, medical records or allegations about others without permission and a sound basis. Do not turn a campaign into harassment of officials, researchers or private individuals. Peaceful advocacy is stronger when it asks specific questions and leaves room for evidence to change an answer.

Build Community Without Requiring Agreement

People can work together on dignity, consent and fair treatment while disagreeing about the cause of a particular event. The Coalition welcomes that common ground. Community support should reduce isolation, encourage appropriate assistance and help people make informed choices.

Our public invitation is to learn, preserve useful information, ask institutions for accountable answers and help prepare protections for the future of Cognitive Liberty.

The Coalition and the Work Ahead

Cognitive Freedom Coalition prepares rights, evidence standards and safeguards for the future of Cognitive Liberty. It brings research, public education and policy discussion into a shared conversation about freedom of thought, mental privacy and human dignity.

Public Education and Professional Dialogue

Different audiences contribute different strengths. Human rights organizations can develop protections and routes to remedy. Journalists can examine claims, institutions and incentives. Members of the public can shape priorities and ask how technology affects everyday choices. Governments can establish responsibility, oversight and enforceable safeguards.

The Coalition seeks useful contributions: clear explanations, focused research questions, model policies, ethical principles and practical institutional standards. The purpose is to prepare people and institutions for emerging risks while supporting technologies that improve lives.

The Neuro Frequency Investigation Initiative

NFII is the Neuro Frequency Investigation Initiative, a Coalition initiative being finalized for a Q4 2026 launch. Its public information and research pathways are available now. Planned outreach will seek connections with universities worldwide and thousands of researchers. Participation will depend on agreement; an outreach plan is not a claim of institutional endorsement. [8]

Independent research should use informed consent, clearly stated questions and methods capable of distinguishing competing explanations. Findings should be reported with their scope and limitations. Null results and corrections are valuable because the quality of the record matters more than a preferred answer.

Principles for Collaboration

- Connect each project to a concrete contribution to Cognitive Freedom, such as a safeguard, an ethical standard, a public explanation or a governance proposal.
- Make responsibilities, conflicts of interest and the basis for conclusions visible. Distinguish a proposal from an adopted policy or verified finding.
- Respect privacy and meaningful participation. Arrange an appropriate process before sharing sensitive records or individual accounts.

Start a Conversation

We welcome inquiries about research, reporting, public education and policy collaboration. Begin with the question you want to address, the perspective you bring and the practical outcome you hope to develop.

Contact: contact@CognitiveFreedomCoalition.org

Website: cognitivefreedomcoalition.org

Research Initiative: cognitivefreedomcoalition.org/nfii

A Framework for Evaluating a Proposal

A useful Cognitive Freedom proposal connects a specific activity with the people it affects, the benefit it seeks and the protection it needs. The following questions can guide a meeting, a policy review, a reporting plan or a public discussion.

Purpose and Benefit

- What human need does the activity serve? Who receives the benefit, and who bears its risks or costs?
- Is the proposed use necessary for that purpose, or could a less intrusive approach achieve the same result?

Information and Choice

- What signals or personal information are collected? What further inferences might be created? Who can obtain either?
- Can people understand the proposal, refuse it, leave it or choose a realistic alternative without unfair penalty?

Evidence and Accountability

- Which claims have been demonstrated, under what conditions and for whom? Which are goals, assumptions or future scenarios?
- Who is responsible for mistakes, misuse or harm? What independent review, complaint route and remedy are available?

A Simple Way to Record the Answer

Write a short statement of the purpose, affected people, intended benefit, relevant evidence, unresolved questions and proposed safeguards. Name the responsible institution and the next decision. Revisit that record when the purpose, technology or evidence changes.

Essential Terms

Neurotechnology: technologies that interact with or help study the nervous system.

Neural data: information recorded from nervous-system activity.

Mental inference: a conclusion about a mental state or process derived from data.

Neurorights: rights and safeguards addressing the effects of neurotechnology on people.

Brain-computer interface: a system linking recorded brain activity with a computational or assistive function.

The Coalition uses these questions to keep the purpose clear: technology should expand human possibility while protecting the freedom to remain the author of one's own mental life.

Sources and Further Reading

1. OHCHR, [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

Privacy, freedom of thought, remedy and research consent.

2. UNESCO, [Ethics of Neurotechnology](#)

Human rights and the international ethics conversation.

3. HHS, [The Belmont Report](#)

Respect for persons, beneficence and justice.

4. DARPA, [Six Paths to the Nonsurgical Future of Brain-Machine Interfaces](#), 2019

N3 research objectives and interface development.

5. Tang and Colleagues, [Semantic Reconstruction of Continuous Language](#), 2023

Nature Neuroscience, non-invasive brain recordings and language reconstruction.

6. Willett and Colleagues, [A High-Performance Speech Neuroprosthesis](#), 2023

Nature, implanted interface supporting attempted-speech decoding.

7. OECD, [Responsible Innovation in Neurotechnology](#)

Recommendation adopted in 2019, governance across development and use.

8. [Neuro Frequency Investigation Initiative \(NFII\)](#)

Coalition initiative, research pathways and participant information.

9. OHCHR, [Convention Against Torture](#)

Definitions and provisions concerning investigation and redress.

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