



Innovating for Equality: Catalyzing Opportunity for Women in Law through Digital Transformation and AI

Executive Summary

Women worldwide face inequality and barriers in law, whether working as professionals where they are excluded from top leadership roles, encounter bias, unequal pay, navigate inflexible working environments and more or in accessing law and justice to fulfill their legal needs.¹ Digital transformation and AI threaten to amplify inequality and barriers and are already bringing new harms. They are also catalyzing tectonic shifts in the legal sector, presenting historic opportunity to combat inequality, inequity, exclusion, and bias inherent in the legal and justice systems and workplaces of today as new systems, types of organizations, solutions, and products are built. Artificial intelligence (AI) is supercharging this opportunity as well as the imperative for action to advance equality as global frameworks are reimagined, public and private sector institutions establish new bodies to govern and support the field, and market forces stimulate intense activity and shift paradigms. These advancements and similar ones brought by other emerging technologies are shaping the future of the sector.

Around the world, women have seized the opportunity, turning to entrepreneurship or pioneering innovation and digital transformation in their institutions and even their countries. Notably this group includes numerous women lawyers who have left roles in traditional legal institutions to pursue the many benefits offered by these future facing fields, including to escape barriers they face in reaching leadership roles and their full potential in those settings.

Fully harnessing the opportunity requires robust, timely efforts to empower and support more women to lead AI, digital transformation, engage in law-related entrepreneurship, and forge careers in artificial intelligence, other emerging technology, and innovation. Vigorous, rapid action is needed to ensure diversity and equal representation among new artificial intelligence bodies especially those implicating law, e.g., governance, apply a gender lens to investments and procurement in the sector, expand access to finance, and deploy aggressive efforts to capacitate, empower, and support women in these fields.

Strong women's leadership is also pivotal to maximizing the opportunity of digital transformation and AI to build legal and justice systems, institutions, and solutions centered on the needs and values of women. Challenges women face in addressing legal needs and accessing justice are well-documented in some countries, but efforts to understand and incorporate women's perspectives, values, and preferences for outcomes and solutions are more nascent. Women's perspectives on what constitutes "good legal solutions and outcomes" can diverge from those offered by the male designed and dominated systems of today. Women-led efforts to broaden and deepen this understanding and incorporate the results in the design of new systems, institutions, solutions, and products is essential to shifting paradigms to respond to the needs of the 4 billion women worldwide.

1. See generally National Association of Women Lawyers, *Behind the Numbers*, 2022, [Research \(nawl.org\)](https://www.nawl.org/research); American Bar Association, Commission on Women in the Profession, [Women in the Profession \(americanbar.org\)](https://www.americanbar.org/publications/women_in_the_profession); Law Society of England and Wales, *Influencing for Impact: The Need For Gender Equality In The Legal Profession Women In Leadership In Law Report Findings from the women's roundtables*, March 2019; IAWL, [Women in Leadership | African Women in Law](https://www.iawl.org/women-in-leadership).

Women pioneering digital transformation, legal and justice innovation, artificial intelligence and other technology in the legal and justice sectors (the Field) face numerous challenges and barriers.² These exist across a broad spectrum of areas and are often interrelated and intersectional. Professional challenges and barriers include lack of 1) support for women transitioning to the Field; 2) mentorship and community support; 3) awareness of the Field and career pathways; 4) role models; 5) bias, discrimination, and harassment; 6) gaps in education and training; and 7) inadequate support for women entrepreneurs, especially access to finance; 8) access to human capital; and 9) limited visibility and influence. Personal challenges and barriers include lack of care and societal norms.

This report examines the careers and professional experiences of 105 women leaders in the Field from 31 countries³ with the objective of understanding the potential of growing transformation in law to empower and elevate women in law, catalyze their access to economic opportunities in artificial intelligence, other emerging technology, and legal entrepreneurship and expand women's access to law and justice more generally. It concludes with a Blueprint and call to action to power women to work at the forefront of transformation in law.

2. This report discusses digital transformation, artificial intelligence, other emerging technology, and other legal and justice innovation as a "Field" for purposes of clarity. However, these areas are increasingly implicating most work in the sector and will eventually touch nearly all of it.

3. Interviews included women from: **Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Malaysia, Mongolia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Tanzania, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, and Zimbabwe.**