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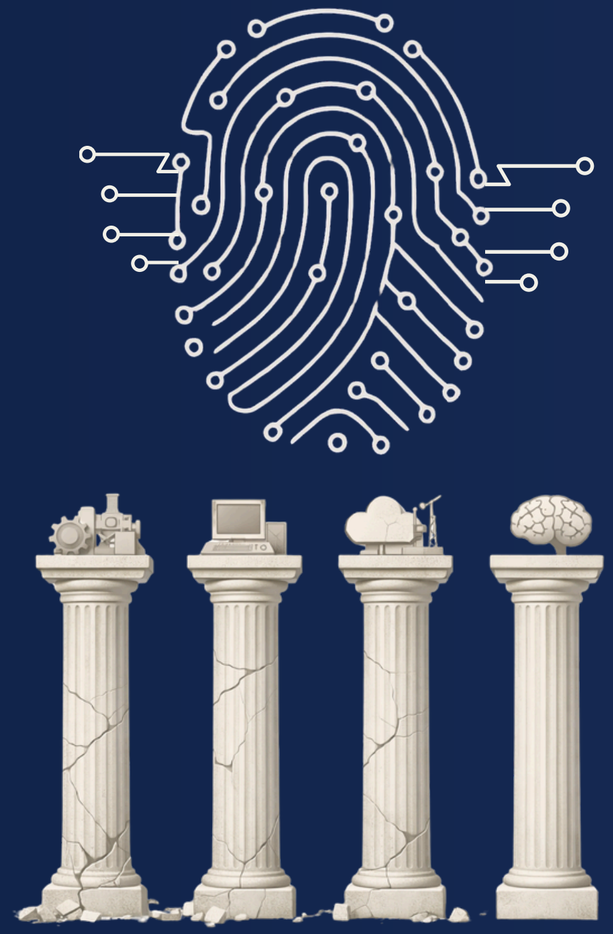
Deconstructing Social Constructs for the Era of AI



Women in AI Quarterly Index Report - March 2026

Illustrations by Copilot and Canva AI

Deconstructing Social Constructs For the Era of AI

Deconstructing Social Constructs: Unbuilding Bias So AI Can Evolve

AI is arriving at a moment when women are underrepresented in the rooms where systems are designed—and overrepresented in the roles most exposed to automation and algorithmic judgment. Models like GPT learn from our past: who was hired, who was promoted, who received care, who got credit, whose pain was believed. Then they scale those patterns in hiring and performance tools, credit scoring, triage systems, and recommendation engines.

This report argues that what appears as “bias in AI” is often not the root issue but a late-stage symptom of something deeper: social constructs that have been hardened over four technology revolutions:

- **Human strength → industrial machines**
- **Human thinking → computers**
- **Human reach → cloud**
- **Human cognition → Artificial Intelligence**

At each stage, women did critical work but were constrained by narratives about who leads, who cares, and whose judgment counts. Today’s AI systems are learning those narratives as if they were objective truth.

At Empressa, our mission is **to empower every woman to build her empire with AI she can trust—so that together we close the gender equity gap in our lifetime.** To advance this vision, we introduce **Deconstructing Social Constructs**—a blueprint for organizations who want to move beyond model-level fixes and examine how their definitions of merit, leadership, risk, and worth are being encoded into AI.

"Deconstructing" measures how intentionally an organization identifies, challenges, and redesigns the historic social constructs already embedded in its systems—especially where they shape women's experiences and outcomes.

It invites leaders to treat AI not as a technical project, but as a catalyst for overdue organizational and cultural redesign—holding a mirror up to their own policies, narratives, and incentives, and deciding which parts they are willing to retire before they are scaled.

For executives, the core shift is this: the most strategic AI question is no longer "How do we remove bias from the model?" but "What social construct are we training our AI to scale—and are we ready to redesign it?"

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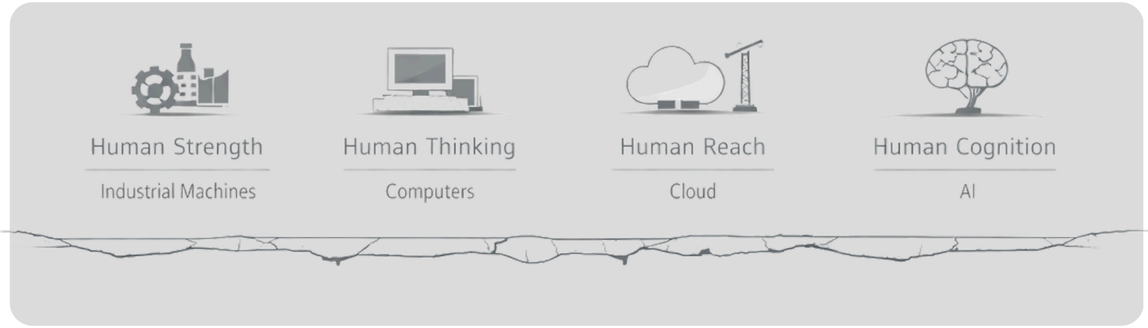
Each technological era has shaped the rules of work and hardwired a new set of constraints for women

Industrial era – Human strength → machines

Computing era – Human thinking → computers

Cloud era – Human reach → cloud

AI era – Human cognition → AI



From Muscle to Cognition: How Tech Locked in Gender

Across history, every major technology shift has done more than change how we work; it has quietly rewritten who we expect to do what work, whose judgment we trust, and whose contribution we see as central or "extra."

Each revolution took a core human capacity—muscle, logic, reach, now cognition—and scaled it through machines, embedding the gender norms of its era into the way industries, institutions, and careers were built.

For women, this has meant showing up at every stage as indispensable yet constrained: powering factories while being paid as "secondary" earners, building the foundations of computing while being written out of its prestige, driving engagement on digital platforms without owning the infrastructure or value they create.

As we now step into the AI era, these layered histories converge.

The same constructs that once dictated who ran the machines, who wrote the code, and who clicked "accept" now sit, visibly fractured, inside the data and decisions AI trains on.

Industrial era – Human strength → machines

Factories multiplied muscle. Women formed a large share of factory and textile workers, often performing dangerous, repetitive labor for lower wages. Their paid work was treated as supplementary to men's "real" earnings, while their unpaid domestic labor remained invisible. Over time, a construct hardened: men as primary earners and machine operators; women as flexible labor and household anchors.

Computing era – Human thinking → computers

Early computing relied heavily on women as "human computers" and programmers. As programming gained prestige and pay, many women were pushed to the margins. Logic, abstraction, and "hard tech" were framed as masculine strengths; relational and contextual intelligence became "soft skills" assigned to support roles. Women remained in tech, but often at the periphery of power.

Cloud era – Human reach → cloud

Cloud computing collapsed distance and enabled global platforms. Women became prolific users and content creators, especially on social and collaboration tools. Yet decisions about infrastructure, governance, and monetization were concentrated in relatively homogeneous groups. The pattern persisted: women as data providers and power users, not as default architects of the systems shaping their lives.

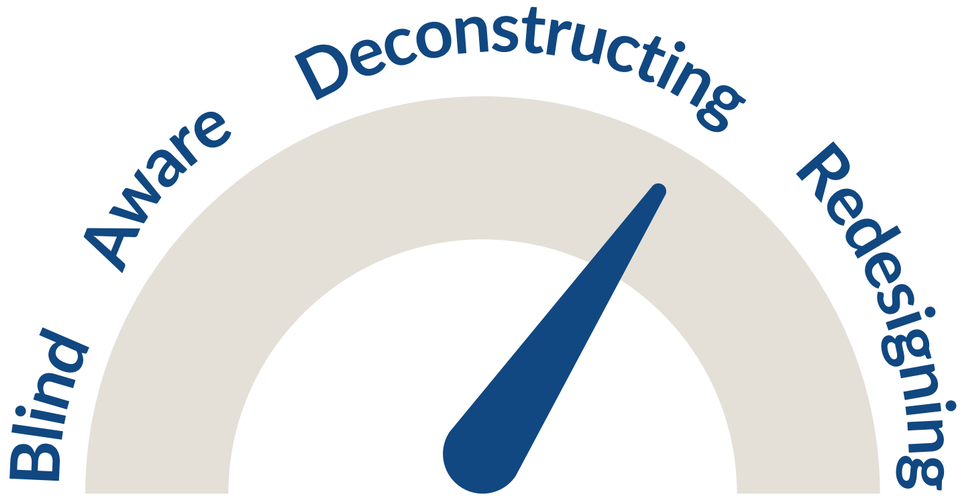
> ~67% of the time AI reshapes hiring, credit, or work, women are more likely to be screened out, scored as riskier, or pushed into jobs most exposed to automation.

AI era – Human cognition → AI

AI now scales cognition—patterns of judgment and association. It is used to screen résumés, propose credit limits, rank candidates, draft performance reviews, prioritize patients, and surface "experts." Women are still a minority in AI roles and leadership, even as their jobs are more exposed to automation and their data is used to train the systems. AI is not inventing these imbalances; it is inheriting and amplifying them.

AI is already reshaping how women are seen and judged across hiring, credit, healthcare, and safety.

Résumé and credit models built on male-dominated histories quietly penalize caregiving breaks and non-traditional careers, clinical and policing systems inherit data that undercounts women's risks and pain, and recommendation engines echo decades of media that underrepresent women as experts. In each case, AI is redefining critical decisions by scaling constructs that were never neutral to begin with.



Organization Score: 73

Construct-Blind
AI initiatives ignore historical bias.

Construct-Aware
Leaders recognize bias but respond episodically.

Deconstructing
Teams systematically examine constructs and monitor outcomes.

Construct-Redesigning
AI becomes a catalyst for redesigning systems with women as co-architects.

The Deconstructing Social Constructs Framework

The Deconstructing Social Constructs Framework offers a way for organizations to move from reaction to design, shifting attention from "what the model did" to what we taught it to believe through our data, structures, and incentives.

Purpose: Reveal the social constructs AI is scaling, ensure women's realities shape its design and governance, and target changes to roles, metrics, and narratives before they're baked into AI workflows.

Dimensions: The Framework uses the following six dimensions, each scored 0–100 and mapped to four maturity levels: Construct-Blind, Construct-Aware, Deconstructing, and Construct-Redesigning.

1. **Historical Roles & Narratives:** How far jobs and pay still reflect old "women's work" hierarchies.
2. **Epistemic Diversity & Decision Logic:** Whose thinking—especially women's—shapes AI questions and metrics.
3. **Global Reach & Representation:** Whether data and governance reflect women's lives.
4. **Cognitive Equity in AI Workflows:** Whether AI checks for gender harm in key decisions or simply repeats it.
5. **Power, Governance & Accountability:** Who steers AI—and whether women hold real oversight and veto power.
6. **Culture, Belonging & Everyday Courtesy:** How safe it is for women to use, question, and lead with AI daily.

The “Deconstructing” Framework Scoring Logic

Each of the six dimensions is assessed using both quantitative data (representation, outcomes) and qualitative evidence (policies, stories, governance practices). The results combine into an overall score, with deliberate emphasis on two key drivers:

1. **Epistemic Diversity & Decision Logic**
2. **Cognitive Equity in AI Workflows**

To reflect where leverage is greatest in the AI era, we recommend assigning the following percentage weights to each dimension when calculating the overall score for your organization:

Dimension	Weight
Historical Roles & Narratives	15%
Epistemic Diversity & Decision Logic	20%
Global Reach & Representation	15%
Cognitive Equity in AI Workflows	25%
Power, Governance & Accountability	15%
Culture, Belonging & Everyday Courtesy	10%

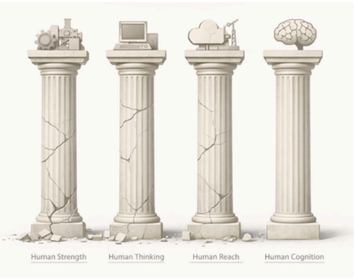
Strategic Implications: From Blame to Design

For organizations, this isn’t a story of “bad AI”; it’s a mirror and a lever:

- **Redesign merit before you automate it:** Refresh performance and potential criteria before AI scales old ones.
- **Put women in the room where AI is defined:** Seat women on AI product, data, governance, and executive teams.
- **Treat women’s caution as a strategic asset:** Treat women’s concerns as early-warning signals for AI risk.
- **Use the Framework as a conversation starter:** Use it to expose old constructs and direct real structural change.

Ultimately, AI forces a simple but uncomfortable question: **What story about women is your organization teaching its machines—and is that the story you want to scale?**

Leaders who confront that question directly, and re-author the construct, will not only reduce risk; they will build organizations where women help design a future in which AI amplifies human dignity, shared wisdom, and more equitable opportunity. ♦



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A world where women building their empires with AI close the gender equity gap in our lifetime.

Empressa AI

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Canva, ChatGPT, Empressa AI, Microsoft Copilot, and Perplexity