

A leading figure in accountancy has urged women to rise to the challenge as it was revealed that falling numbers of women are entering the top levels of the professions.

Celia Adams, Worcestershire chairman of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, is concerned that one third fewer women in law practices were aspiring to partnership roles.

She said better decision-making would result where board members encouraged women to join, and urged them to take a fresh approach.

The drop in women wanting to become partners was revealed this month in Legal Week Intelligence's 2010 Employee Satisfaction Report. It indicated that more women were seeing as 'unobtainable' the idea of going for top roles – the number doing so plunging from 50 per cent to 38 per cent since 2008.

Celia Adams said: "The danger is that having the same types of people, on the same boards, gives the same old solutions, rather than innovations.

"Diversity encourages fairness at the heart of decision-making, and results in better decisions and better business."

Celia, also a campaigner for Women in Accountancy, said: "Women have proven their worth in the professions in recent decades, bringing inspirational leadership in business and politics.

"Many have become household names, sweeping aside any doubt about the value of their contribution at the highest levels. It is worrying that these findings suggest a reversal of this positive trend."

Meanwhile, the Recruitment and Employment Confederation's Accounting and Financial Services sector group has welcomed the Government's positive response to the Women in the City inquiry carried out by the Treasury Select Committee in April.

The Government accepted that something needed to be done to address the lack of diversity on city Boards, problems with gender pay gaps, flexible working and parental leave.

* Sunday Times' Enterprise Editor Rachel Bridge, author of 'Making a Million before Lunch', who is speaking at the next ICAEW annual dinner, is an example of this inspirational approach. She will reveal short path to business success.