

ELITE COACHING PATHWAYS REPORT 2024

akea  Sundström  EPOS



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ELITFOTBOLL DAM



ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

ELITE COACHING PATHWAYS

Football has historically been, and still is, a predominantly male-dominated industry. Despite the rise of women's football in recent decades, we still have a low proportion of women in coaching positions, especially at the elite level. The reasons for this are many, both structural and individual.

Currently, several initiatives are being made within Swedish football to increase the number of female coaches and support them in their leadership journey. We see this as a crucial part of the transformation process, where Elitfotboll Dam aims to further develop this through its platform and role in elite football in Sweden, to influence current structures and environments in which coaches operate.

The leagues within Elitfotboll Dam, Elitettan (EE) and OBOS Damallsvenskan (ODA), are dependent on requirements for coaching licenses, which are affected by established structures in Swedish football.

We aim to develop elite football in Sweden by challenging and influencing the perception of what a competent elite coach is and should be.

OBJECTIVE

- We want more people to see the elite coaching profession as a possible career path.
- Create opportunities for more women in elite coaching positions within elite football in Sweden.
- Open up the job market in football for women.
- Increase knowledge and awareness of the structural barriers within elite football in Sweden for women as elite coaches.

ELITE COACHING PATHWAYS AREAS OF IMPACT



5.1 ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



5.5 ENSURE FULL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

QUALITATIVE RESULTS



QUALITATIVE REPORT

To gather insights and input for the development of training programs aimed at educating more women, encouraging them to pursue and retain in a career as elite coaches in the top-tier football leagues, Elitfotboll Dam (EFD) conducted a qualitative study in collaboration with Perspektiv Undersökningar, an independent research firm.

METHOD AND SAMPLE

- The study was conducted using a qualitative approach through digital in-depth interviews.
- A total of 10 interviews, each lasting about one hour, were conducted with active or previously active coaches in the top women's leagues during December 2023 and January 2024.
- The sample consisted of 7 women and 3 men.
- Participants were promised anonymity.
- The study was conducted by Åsa Nes at Perspektiv Undersökningar AB.

TOPICS COVERED IN THE STUDY

- Current and previous coaching roles
- Education and experience
- Recruitment and hiring processes
- Private life and coaching assignments
- Why there are so few female coaches in the top-tier women's leagues



CURRENT AND PREVIOUS COACHING ROLES

Coaches shared both positive and negative experiences from their coaching assignments. Many pointed out that positive changes have occurred in women's football and perceptions of female coaches, but there is still significant progress to be made. Factors affecting the coaching experience include the professionalism of the club, support from club management, and cohesion within the coaching team.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

Strong and supportive coaching team with clear roles and responsibilities

An open and secure coaching team working towards the same goals with a strong sense of unity. Clear roles and expectations contribute to a healthy work environment.

Dedicated players and good resources

Motivated and engaged players who operate in an environment with good resources and facilities. The challenge of performing at the highest level inspires both players and coaches.

Respectful and collaborative environment

An atmosphere characterized by mutual respect and a positive attitude among everyone involved—coaches, players, board members, administrative staff, and volunteers. Good collaboration with the club's juniors and a manageable workload contribute to a sustainable and positive environment.

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

Lack of collaboration and support within the coaching team

When the coaching team does not work towards the same goals or fails to support each other, it creates uncertainty, insecurity, and reduces job satisfaction.

Insufficient support and lack of clarity from club management

A non-supportive board, sports director, or club management that lacks resilience during challenges, along with unclear goals and structures, can lead to different parts of the club pulling in opposite directions.

Overload and lack of resources

Coaches often take on too many roles and are expected to "do everything," combined with insufficient resources, inadequate facilities, and poor training times due to the women's team being subordinate to the men's team in the club.

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Education and extensive experience are crucial for becoming and staying a coach in the higher leagues. It is essential for clubs to support young players in pursuing education early and provide clear pathways for further training.

Coaching Education

Education is vital for becoming and remaining a coach in higher leagues. It provides increased knowledge and skills, opportunities to network and exchange experiences, and formal validation of coaching competence through licenses, which are required to operate at an elite level. Clubs are encouraged to inspire young players to pursue coaching education early to prepare for future coaching roles.

Experience

Extensive coaching experience is critical for success and longevity in the higher leagues. While former elite players may have an advantage due to their playing background, many emphasize that coaching experience is entirely different and demands more than just playing knowledge. Many coaches highlighted that the pressure and responsibility of the coaching role are often underestimated by former players and that thorough experience and education are essential to navigate these challenges.

RECRUITMENT AND HIRING PROCESSES

Recruitment and hiring processes vary widely across clubs. Clarity and structure in these processes create security and better conditions for coaches.

Varied Recruitment and Hiring Practices

Recruitment and hiring practices for coaches vary greatly. Coaches may either be headhunted or seek out positions themselves. These processes can range from quick hires after minimal questioning to comprehensive interviews and comparisons with other candidates. In some cases, head coaches or sports directors directly approach specific coaches they already know, while other times, the hiring process is more structured.

Security and Respect within the Coaching Team

Security and unity within the coaching team are critical for coaches to feel well, perform effectively, and want to remain. Lack of clarity and poor onboarding can lead to insecurity, anxiety, and low confidence. A strong onboarding process is particularly important in coaching teams with mixed genders, to ensure clear expectations and mutual respect.

Lack of Clarity and Professionalism in Clubs

The level of professionalism and clarity in recruitment processes varies between clubs. Some clubs have a clear idea of the type of coach they seek and their expectations, while others lack clear guidelines and act more ad hoc. Lack of clarity and disorganization in the process can create insecurity and anxiety for coaches.

Clear Expectations and Involvement

A clear and structured onboarding process, where club management and sports directors outline both short-term and long-term expectations for the coaching team and the squad, fosters security and understanding for coaches. This increases the likelihood of coaches thriving and staying longer in the club. Involvement in the process is essential but must be combined with clear guidelines and expectations from the club.



PRIVATE LIFE AND COACHING RESPONSIBILITIES

Balancing family life with the demands of a coaching role is a challenge. A supportive partner and a strong network are essential to make it work. Short-term contracts and concerns about job security also impact coaches' decisions about starting a family.

Risks and Insecurities in the Coaching Profession

The coaching profession involves constant risk of dismissal if the team underperforms, creating anxiety that influences decisions about starting a family. This uncertainty is especially concerning for those with families, as it may mean uprooting from jobs, daycare, and schools.

Impact on Family Planning

Many coaches consider having fewer children or none at all due to the demands of the profession. Female coaches, in particular, may find pregnancy, childbirth, and parental leave harder to combine with coaching responsibilities, which affects their decisions to become or remain coaches.

Challenges of Family Life and Work Hours

Combining family life with a coaching role in higher leagues is difficult due to irregular working hours, often six-day workweeks, frequent travel, and short-term contracts. It requires a highly understanding partner and support from close relatives to manage family responsibilities.

Need for Dialogue and Flexibility

There is no simple solution for balancing family life with coaching responsibilities. Each family's needs are unique, and these should be discussed between clubs and coaches during the recruitment process. It is important to consider how the coaching profession affects not only family life but also other aspects of private life.

WHY ARE THERE SO FEW FEMALE COACHES IN HIGHER RANKED WOMEN'S LEAGUES?

Several factors contribute to the lack of female coaches: the perception that coaching is not a real profession, lack of information about how to become a coach, the culture within football, and the pressure to outperform male colleagues.

Perception and Knowledge about the Coaching Profession

Many female players and football enthusiasts do not see coaching as a legitimate profession and do not know how to become football coaches. There is a lack of guidance and support from parent clubs for those interested in pursuing coaching.

Workload and Resources

Coaches in women's football, even at higher levels, often bear a heavy workload due to limited resources. They are expected to "do everything," which becomes exhausting over time and leads many coaches to quit.

Culture and Gender Equality in Football

There is a culture in Swedish football that questions the competence of female coaches, requiring them to outperform male colleagues to be equally valued. This results in many female coaches losing confidence and leaving the profession due to the immense pressure.

Family Life and Coaching Profession

Combining coaching with family life, especially pregnancy and parental leave, is extremely challenging. It requires a highly understanding partner or one who takes primary responsibility for the family, making it difficult for many women to pursue or sustain a coaching career at the elite level.

SUCCESS FACTORS FOR INCREASING AND RETAINING WOMEN IN COACHING ROLES

- Identify and guide interested players into coaching through education and assignments.
- Support and encourage women to apply for and complete advanced coaching courses.
- Ensure clubs have a clear strategy for the team's and coaching staff's future.
- Create safe, respectful, and calm working environments.
- Foster strong, cohesive coaching teams.
- Provide support during pressure and setbacks.



- Change the perception of the coaching role as a legitimate profession.
- Offer mentorship and networking opportunities for elite coaches.
- Foster an inclusive culture that recognizes and values the expertise of all coaches, regardless of gender
- Provide media training and support during media scrutiny.
- Ensure all elite women's teams have relevant resources and facilities.
- Enable daytime training during weekdays.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

QUANTITATIVE REPORT

At the end of the 2024 season, we gathered data regarding the technical and medical teams for the members in Elitettan and OBOS Damallsvenskan. This data collection will be repeated annually to track progress in the areas listed below. By gathering this data, we will create a foundation for identifying potential weak spots and areas where we can and need to develop the member clubs within Elitfotboll Dam.

METHOD

Surveys and Questionnaires

- Data was collected through structured surveys and questionnaires sent to the clubs. These included specific questions about the club's technical and medical teams, their roles, names, gender, employment rate (for specific roles and total), UEFA license, specialized education, ongoing education, and latest assignment.

Observations and Records

- In addition to the surveys, observations and existing records were used to complement and verify the collected data. This included reviewing public records and documentation from the clubs.

Statistical Analysis

- The collected data was analysed statistically to identify patterns, correlations, and significant results. This included calculating employment rates, education levels, and other relevant variables.

DATA POINTS

- Club
- Team (technical/medical)
- Role
- Name
- Gender*
- Employment rate (Specific role)
- Employment rate (Total)
- UEFA License
- Specialized education
- Ongoing education
- Latest assignment

*DEFINING GENDER

In this data collection, gender has been assigned based on the individual's first name. This approach, while commonly used in many contexts, is not without its limitations and should be considered a proxy rather than a definitive measure of gender identity.

We recognize that gender is a complex, multifaceted construct that extends beyond binary categories and is not always accurately represented by one's name. Names traditionally associated with specific genders can often reflect cultural, historical, and societal assumptions, which may not align with a person's self-identified gender or gender expression.

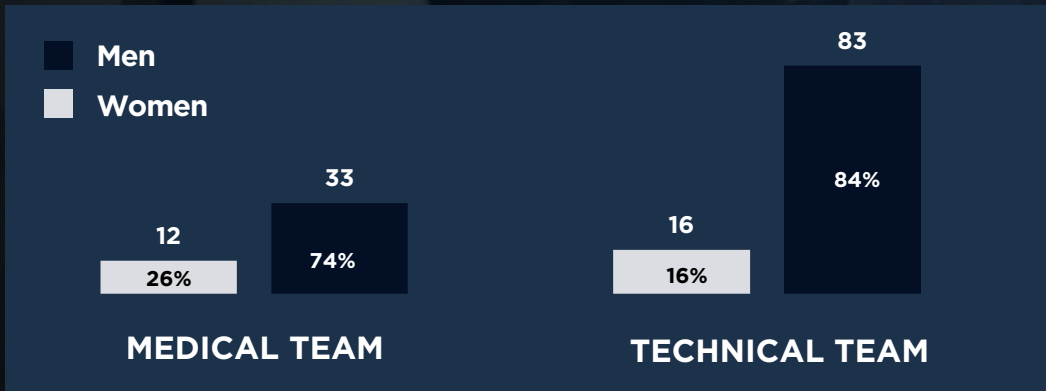
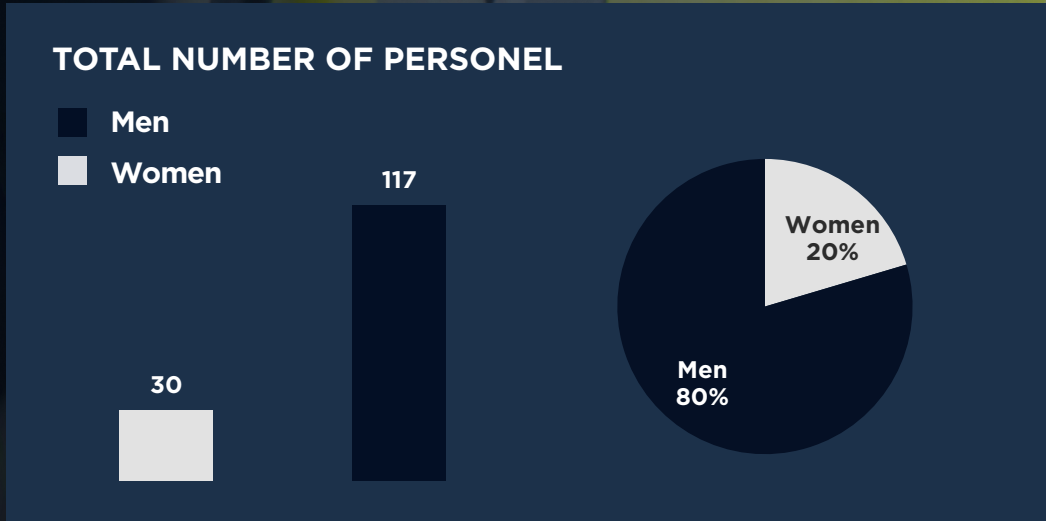
By relying on this method, we acknowledge that it may overlook non-binary individuals, individuals who identify with a gender different from the one traditionally associated with their name, or those who choose not to disclose their gender. However, for practical reasons and the scope of this study, we have adopted this approach as a standardized way of categorizing gender data.

We urge readers and users of this data to interpret the gender information with an understanding of these limitations and the potential for misclassification, particularly in diverse and non-binary contexts. It is important to consider this method as a starting point for further exploration and not as a fully inclusive representation of gender.



NUMBER OF PERSONEL IN TECHNICAL AND MEDICAL TEAMS

To start us of, we present the total number of personel in our leagues. Directly related to the representative team in OBOS Damallsvenskan and Elitettan.

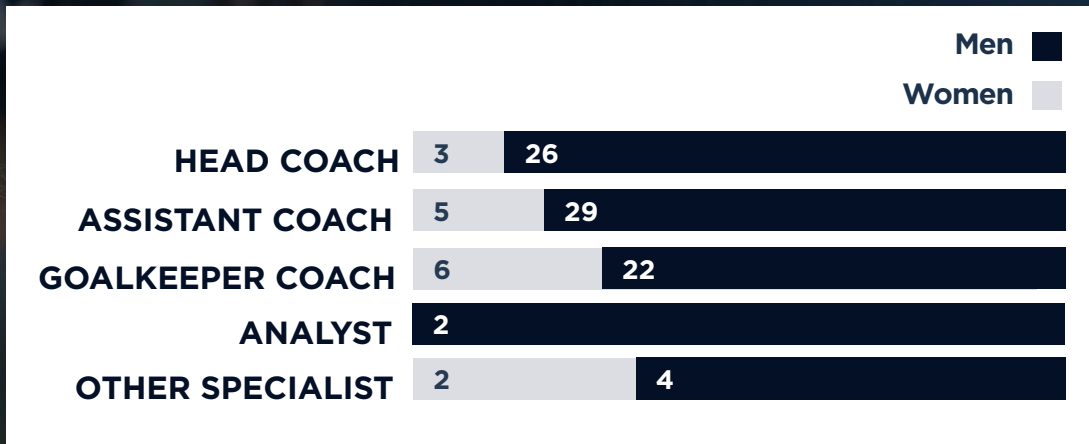




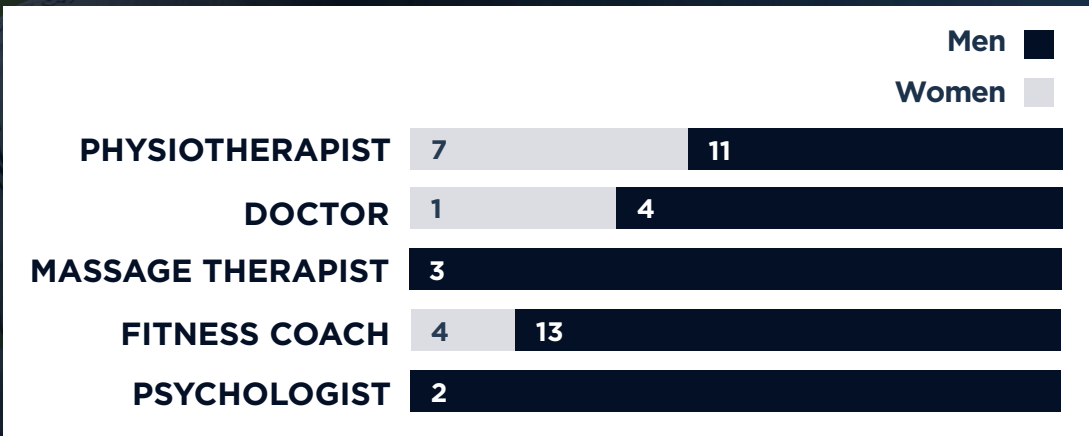
TECHNICAL AND MEDICAL TEAM

Data collected on the composition of our medical and technical teams, focusing on the distribution of women and men within each group. The analysis aims to provide a clear overview of gender representation across the teams, highlighting any patterns or disparities that may exist. By examining this information, we aim to better understand the current balance and identify potential areas for improvement in fostering diversity and inclusion.

TECHNICAL TEAM



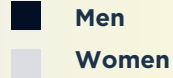
MEDICAL TEAM



GENDER DISTRIBUTION - TECHNICAL AND MEDICAL TEAMS

In the context as a coach within the technical team and medical team, we present the data reported separately for OBOS Damallsvenskan and Elitettan to showcase the differences between a professional end Semi-professional league regarding the average number of team members that constitutes of women.

OBOS DAMALLSVENSKAN



TECHNICAL TEAM



Number of women in the average technical team in OBOS Damallsvenskan constitutes of 0,6 women per team

MEDICAL TEAM



Number of women in the average medical team in OBOS Damallsvenskan constitutes of 0,6 women per team

ELITETTAN



TECHNICAL TEAM

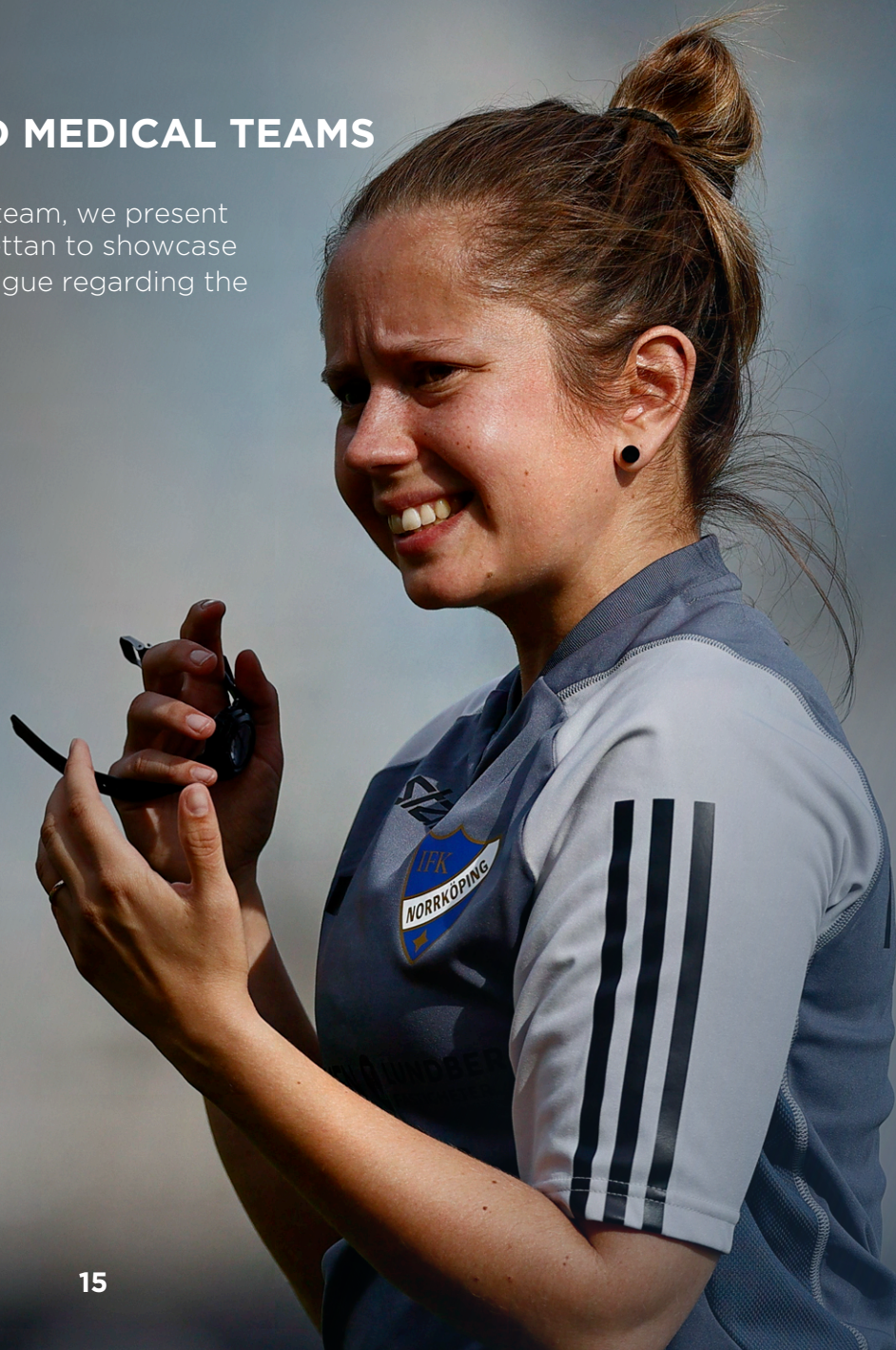


Number of women in the average technical team in Elitettan constitutes of 0,6 women per team

MEDICAL TEAM



Number of women in the average medical team in Elitettan constitutes of 0,3 women per team



GENDER DISTRIBUTION - UEFA LICENSES

Based on the 2025 new requirements for the elitelicensing system the data below is presenting the number of license holders of UEFA B, UEFA A, UEFA PRO, UEFA Mv B, UEFA Mv A. By gathering data regarding license holders we open up for the potential to see how the market looks like for recruiting women to the roles that is regulated by the elite licensing system.

- Men
- Women

HEAD COACH



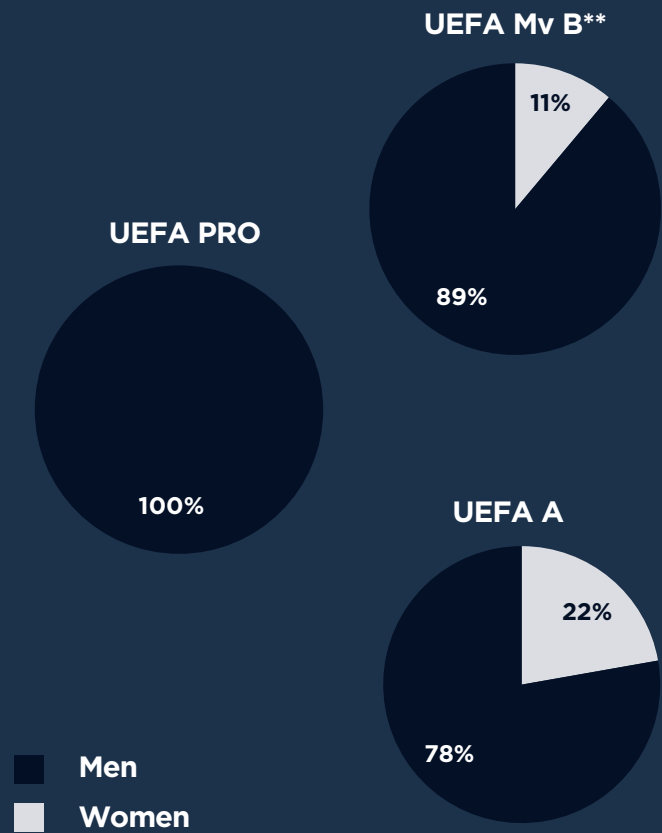
ASSISTANT COACH



GOALKEEPER COACH

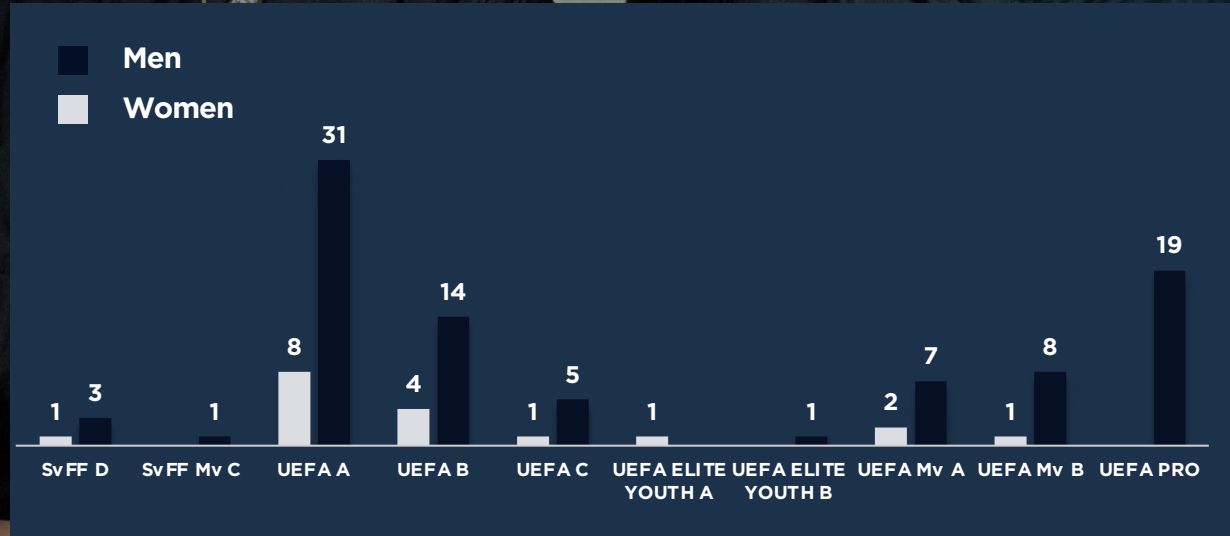


UEFA LICENSEE HOLDERS



The diagrams represents the percentage of personel retaining an UEFA license in Mv B, A and PRO.

** In the data regarding Mv B, UEFA Mv A licensee holders is counted for.



DISCUSSION

When creating change, it is essential to have a foundation that helps identify the right paths for each stakeholder. To increase the number of women, in elite coaching, we have identified several key aspects for reflection and action.

Firstly, the impact of the elite license needs to be highlighted. We see that we need to find ways to meet the new requirements. There is a gap in our goals and how we can meet these requirements in line with the elite license in an equitable manner. This gap indicates an imbalance in the teams, which may be influenced by the fact that the education requirements were set to UEFA PRO before the number of women was equivalent to the number of men. This means that the requirement was raised before there was an equal foundation to ensure that roles with the UEFA PRO license requirement were held by both women and men.

This could create problems for equal teams when future expansions of license requirements occur, if women are not simultaneously educated.

Secondly, men are overrepresented in roles that do not require UEFA licenses. Are we choosing men in roles that do not require education, with an UEFA education because of an implicit standard? Instead of educating and giving female coaches the opportunity to gain experience within the practise? Questions to ask is if there are other factors to clubs hiring these men with UEFA license, than just that? Is a license the only factor to consider when hiring within the coaching profession? Regardless of the reason, what are the long-term consequences of this?

Thirdly, the medical teams show a far more gender-balanced composition. One reason may be that these roles do not require a UEFA license—removing a key structural barrier. Another reason may be the talent pool within this field of knowledge, where there is a broader representation of women and men, then in the field of technical knowledge. This can also contribute to the perception of who can take place in such a team being less normatively linked to men. This, in turn, creates a ripple effect by creating role models, which opens doors for more women in medical teams.

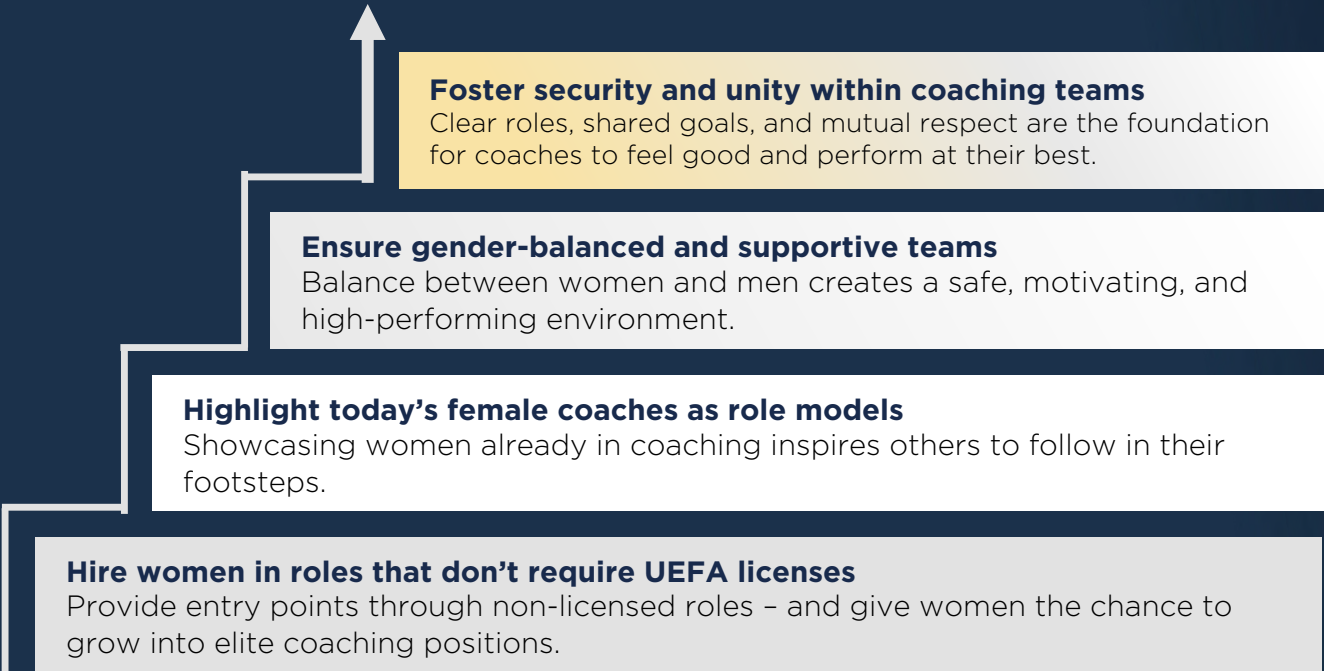
How do we work with the effects of a low equality percentage in the teams, that diminish women in the field of football? There is requests to make sure that the work environment insures to be safe, respectful, and calm. Aswell that the clubs foster an inclusive culture that recognizes and values the expertise of all coaches, regardless of gender. To do that, there may be a point to hire and listen to all perspective to insure diverse perspective. The effects of a low equality percentage within the teams may lead to a decreased attractiveness of the profession for women or individuals who identify more closely with them.

We are making progress, with education being offered to ensure more women with higher competence in football. But to get them there, the missing piece is to ensure they have the right experience to be accepted to the education programs.

LEARNINGS

The insights for initiating change discovered in this report consist of four steps that can serve as the foundation for making coaches in OBOS Damallsvenskan and Elitettan feel well, perform effectively, and want to remain in their coaching roles.

Based on our findings, here are four essential steps to make it happen:



ELITE COACHING PATHWAYS

made possible by



A report from Elitfotboll Dam

Written by Linn Eriksson,
Data collection: Elitfotboll Dam
Interviews: Perspektiv Undersökning
Pictures: Bildbyrå, KDFF, IK Uppsala Fotboll