

GENDER & SPORTS



'23 REPORT
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PRESENTED BY

Eccsell
SPORTS

WELCOME

There is an uptick of research around Gender and Sports at levels not seen since the 1990s. One reason for this is simple. Since the passage of Title IX, three million more female athletes play high school sports– and women make up 44% of all NCAA athletes.[1] Awesome! Even more encouraging is that the National Federation of State High School Association and the National Collegiate Athletic Association are also producing reports around gender and sports. We feel there's still work to be done. Why? The bulk of the literature on gender and sports primarily focuses on collegiate athletes where only 25% of NCAA head coaching and athletic director positions are held by females. Comparatively, research on club and high school sports remain understudied. Just 66% of young females participate at the club and high school levels compared to 81% for males.[2] We applaud any effort that moves the meter from viewing female athletes as novelties to one that places them as the true powerhouses that they are.

That's why we believe there's room for research surrounding gender and sports in the club and high school sports arenas. This is where Ecsell Sports helps. We aim to guide ADs and coaches to improve the student-athlete experience from club to middle school, and from high school to college. We've done our homework with the Ecsell Coaching Effect Survey Report. Our report helps us understand the dynamics between coaches and student-athletes.

We gathered feedback from **4,587** student-athletes and **245** coaches, spanning **32** schools from coast to coast. The early takeaways showed the challenges facing female student-athletes and coaches. The results tell us we're on the right path and produced some fascinating insights. First and foremost, female leaders are profoundly underrepresented in the coaching ranks at the high school level. Yet, despite the disparity, here are some numbers to consider:

- **7%** more student-athletes said female coaches are easier to talk to than male coaches.
- **5%** more student-athletes said male coaches hold them more accountable than female coaches.
- **29%** represents the lowest percentage of coaches to athletes by gender (female athletes to female coaches).

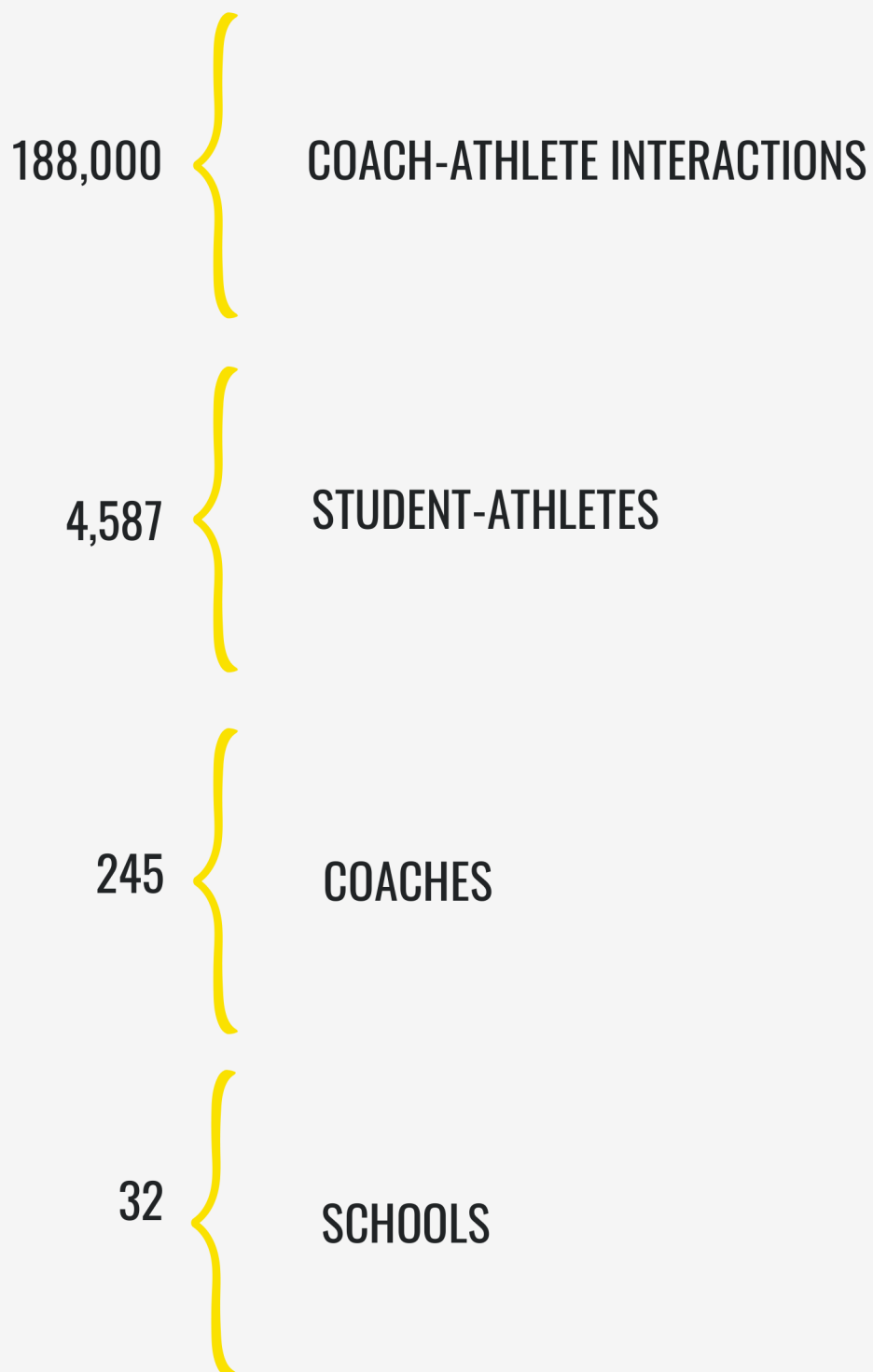
As an organization, we think about how richer our lives are working with, and cheering for, female athletes. Females get the chance to participate in previously male-dominated sports and show incredible athleticism while doing so. Today, we are sharing with you the beginning stages of what we believe will create more profound insights into student athletics. We are proud to share some very early takeaways surrounding the intersections of gender and sports. First, there are fewer females in leadership, giving athletes fewer opportunities to experience a positive female leader. Second, the data shows that coaches and student-athletes may interact differently based on gender dynamics (see page 4). Such numbers suggest it would be best to have opportunities to be coached by both males and females.

Why gender and sports? Because every athlete matters. For us, every student-athlete is more than a data point. It's a heart and a future. We hope this starts deeper discussions about how every one of us shapes the student-athlete experience.

[1] National Federation of State High School Associations; NCAA Sports Sponsorship and Participation Report, 1971-72 and 2020-21. <https://www.ncaa.org/news/2022/6/23/media-center-title-ix-report-shows-gains-in-female-participation-though-rates-lag-increases-by-men.aspx>

[2] Zarrett, N., Veliz, P., & Sabo, D. (2018). Teen Sport in America: Why Participation Matters. Women's Sports Foundation.

SAMPLE SIZE



GENDER DYNAMICS

We see that half of the student-athletes in our data are male and half are female. This indicates that both males and female student-athletes are participating in athletics at similar levels. A win! However, our research team sees differences in the proportion of male coaches and female coaches leading their teams. Simply, while participation rates by gender are similar among student-athletes, leadership rates are not. This finding is important to note for two reasons. The first is simple: student-athletes need diverse experiences. One easy way to provide that is to give student-athletes opportunities to be coached by male and female coaches. Additionally, our current generation of student-athletes are potentially missing opportunities to experience leadership by talented female coaches. The second is that our findings mirror what other researchers have found. [1] The reasons for this disparity and how it could be balanced is important for schools and teams to discuss and explore.

Our data indicates that female student-athletes report a statistically significantly lower student-athlete experience at their school. The good news is that there's an opportunity to improve this experience. Knowing how ADs, club directors and coaches affect this experience gives us all a good starting block to sprint from.

[1] Researchers are currently examining the impact of the normalization of male dominated leadership. Evans, A. B., & Pfister, G. U. (2021). Women in sports leadership: A systematic narrative review. *International review for the sociology of sport*, 56(3), 317-342; Ryan, I., & Dickson, G. (2018). The invisible norm: An exploration of the intersections of sport, gender and leadership. *Leadership*, 14(3), 329-346; Piggott, L. V. (2021). Gender and social inequity in and through sport leadership. In *Research Handbook on Sports and Society* (pp. 159-173). Edward Elgar Publishing.



+ 3%

FEMALE COACHES SCORE
HIGHER THAN MALE
COACHES
IN **PSYCHOLOGICAL
SAFETY**

GENDER DYNAMICS

Below signifies the ratio between the gender of the coach and the gender of the athlete in our sample size.

MALE COACH | MALE STUDENT-ATHLETE

47%

FEMALE COACH | FEMALE STUDENT-ATHLETE

29%

FEMALE COACH | MALE STUDENT-ATHLETE

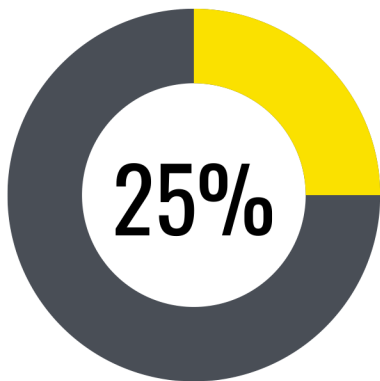
3%

MALE COACH | FEMALE STUDENT-ATHLETE

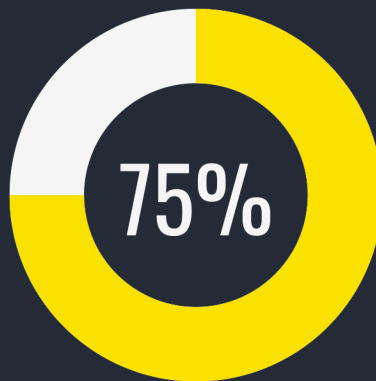
21%



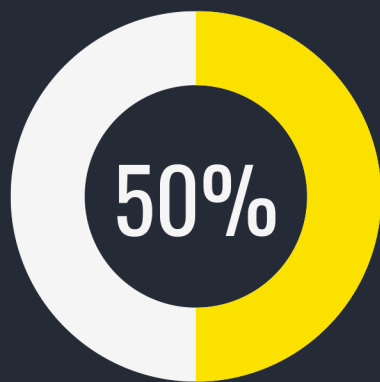
GENDER DEMOGRAPHICS



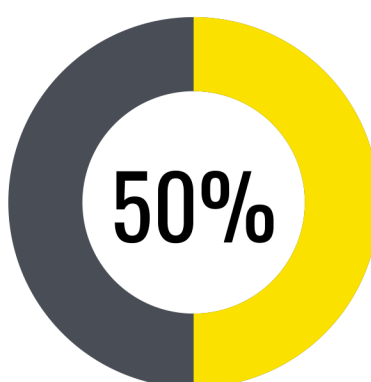
FEMALE COACHES



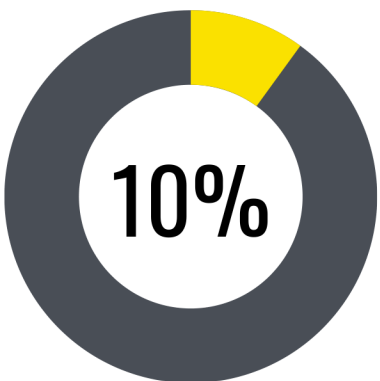
MALE COACHES



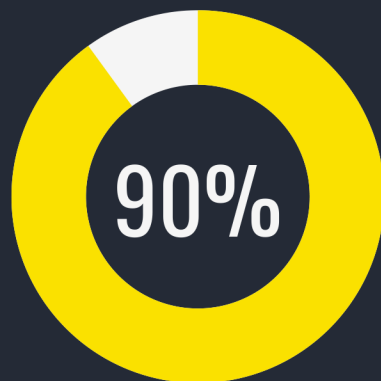
FEMALE ATHLETES



MALE ATHLETES



FEMALE ADS



MALE ADS

SIX THEMES

With the help of our robust research methodology, we have identified these six behavioral coaching themes that have the most significant affect on the student-athlete experience. We then quantify a coach's effectiveness within these themes and provide detailed, easy-to-understand reports to ADs, club directors and coaches. The Coaching Effect Survey Report is your program's playbook for consistent coaching growth.

RELATIONSHIP



CONNECTION

Building relationships of trust with student-athletes.



PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Constructing an environment that allows student-athletes to be their own true self without fear of negative consequences.

ORDER



STRUCTURE

Establishing an organized, consistent, and predictable team environment.



COMMUNICATION

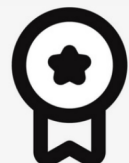
A coach's capacity to effectively share information, strategies, and expectations with their student-athletes.

COMPLEXITY



CHALLENGE

Creating unique growth opportunities for each student-athlete that moves them out of their comfort zone.



SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Advancing competence and technique so student-athletes perform to the best of their ability.

STUDENT-ATHLETES, COACHES & GENDER

Data is powerful because it can provide a deeper understanding of our impact as coaches, athletic directors, and club directors on the student-athlete experience. Another precious function, however, is that it can give athletic programs a starting place to talk about and understand the lived experiences of our athletes. In the following pages, we hope our initial findings encourage stakeholders to start conversations with colleagues and think about topics they may not have considered. And hopefully, reflect on strengths and opportunities for growth.

Our data suggests that the combination of the coach's gender and the gender of the student-athlete, or the gender dynamic, can influence a student-athlete's experience. We are not suggesting one dynamic is better than the other. Instead, we hope these outcomes prompt reflection and discussions amongst leaders and coaches.

For example, our research currently indicates that male coaches talk more about the importance of mindset or attitude than their female coaching counterparts. At the same time, student-athletes report it is easier to talk about issues or problems with female coaches.

We hope to start conversations about why this could be and what might be the implications of this type of phenomenon. We are not alone in this area as many researchers seek to answer these questions.[1] Also, how can athletic programs identify and challenge current gender norms to allow our student-athletes the best, most well-rounded experiences and growth?

[1] Darvin, L., Pegoraro, A., & Berri, D. (2018). Are men better leaders? An investigation of head coaches' gender and individual players' performance in amateur and professional women's basketball. *Sex Roles*, 78, 455-466; Villalon, C. A., & Martin, S. B. (2020). High school coaches' coaching efficacy: relationship with sport psychology exposure and gender factors. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 32(1), 64-80; Cnen, T. W., Chiu, Y. C., & Hsu, Y. (2021). Perception of social support provided by coaches, optimism/pessimism, and psychological well-being: Gender differences and mediating effect models. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 16(2), 272-280.

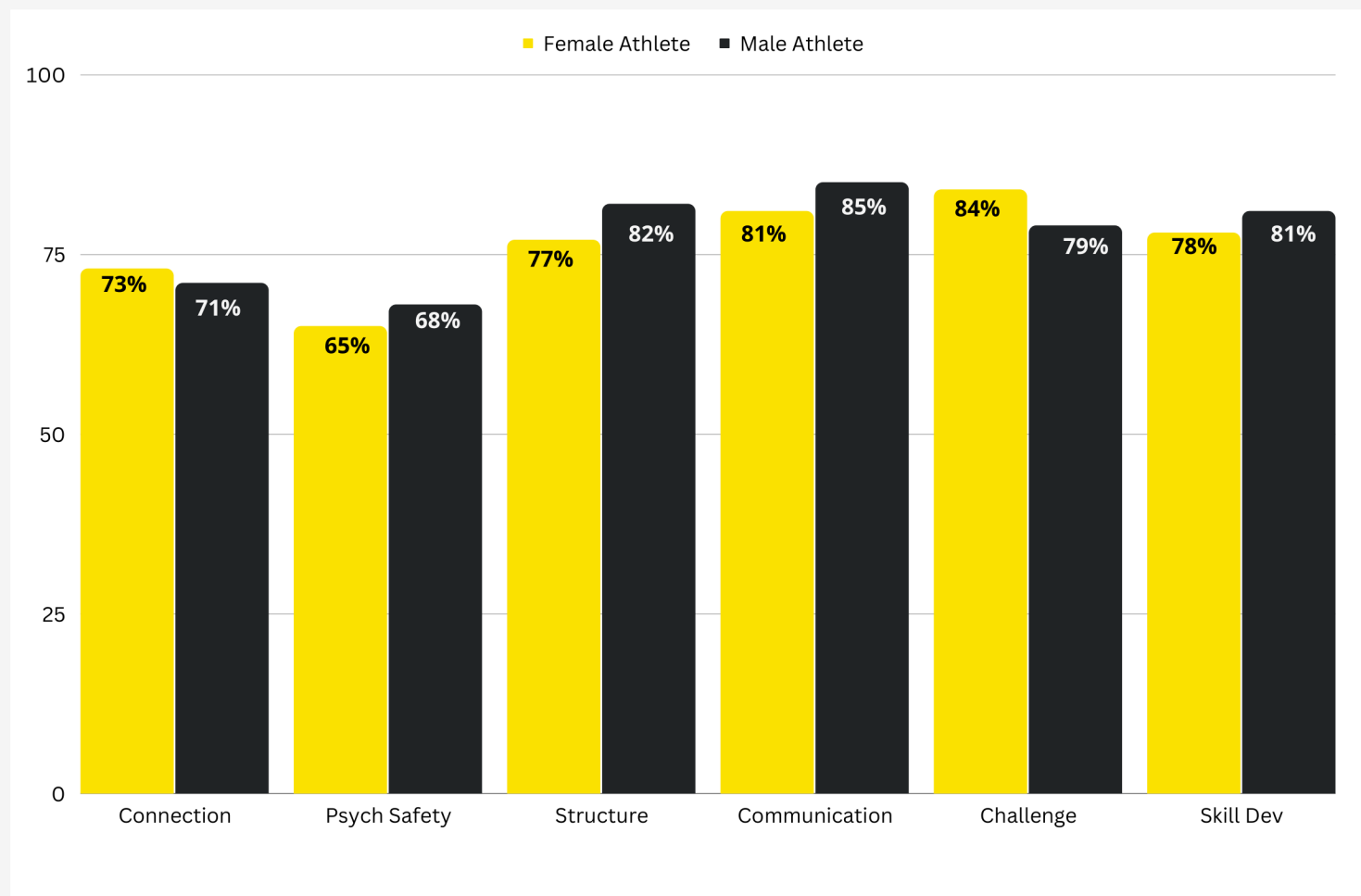


+ 4%

STUDENT- ATHLETES SCORE
THEIR MALE COACHES
HIGHER THAN FEMALE
COACHES IN
COMMUNICATION.

THEME SCORES BY GENDER OF STUDENT-ATHLETE

The following chart represents the positive rating that athletes gave their coaches by gender of the student-athlete.



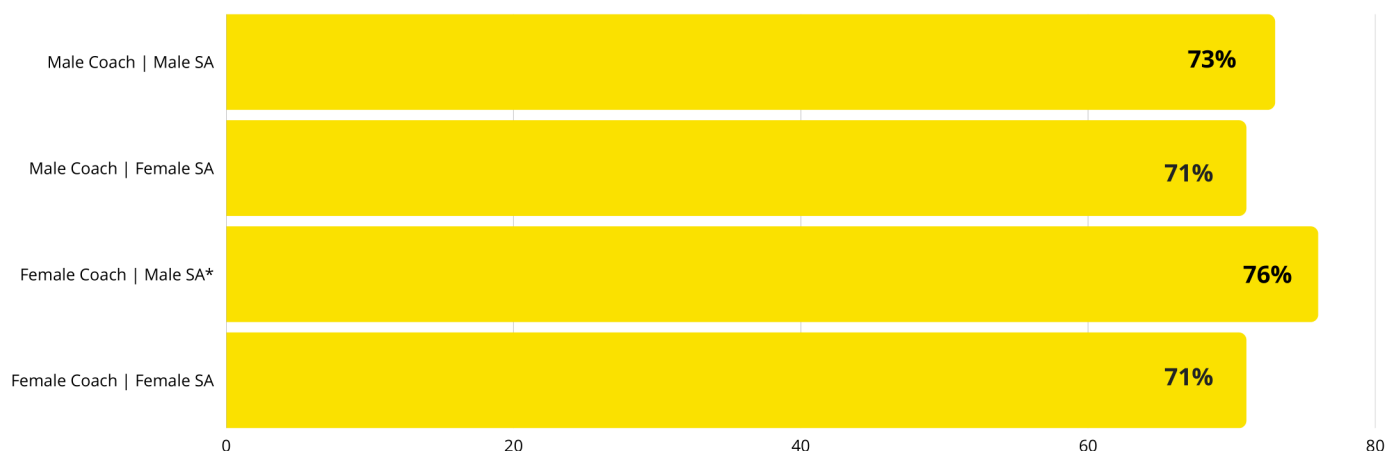
+ 3%

MORE STUDENT-ATHLETES
SCORE THEIR MALE COACHES
HIGHER THAN FEMALE
COACHES IN **CHALLENGE**.

THEME SCORES BY GENDER OF COACH & STUDENT-ATHLETE

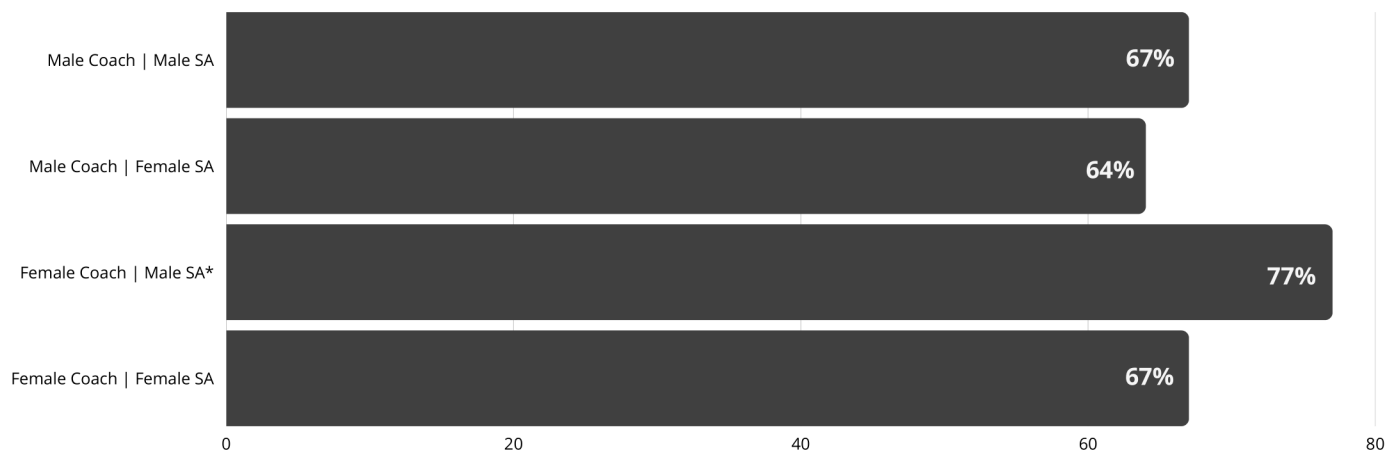
The following charts represent the theme scores given by student-athletes for coaches, according to the gender of the student-athlete. These charts also indicate that the gender dynamic between the coach and the student-athlete plays a role in the overall student-athlete experience.

CONNECTION



Male athletes paired with a female coach have the **highest** score in Connection and Psych Safety.

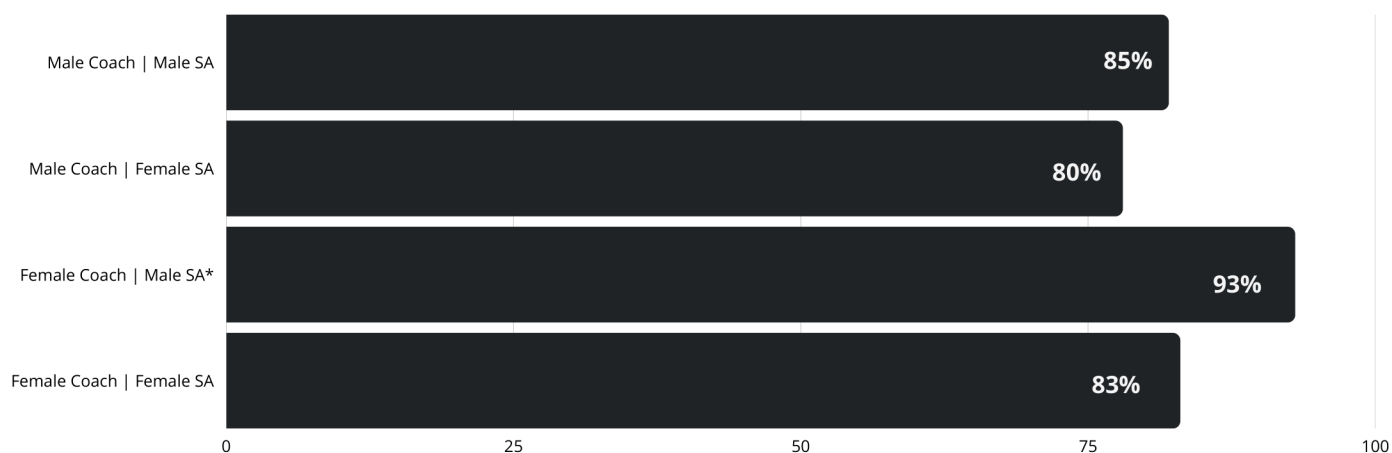
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY



THEME SCORES BY GENDER OF COACH & STUDENT-ATHLETE

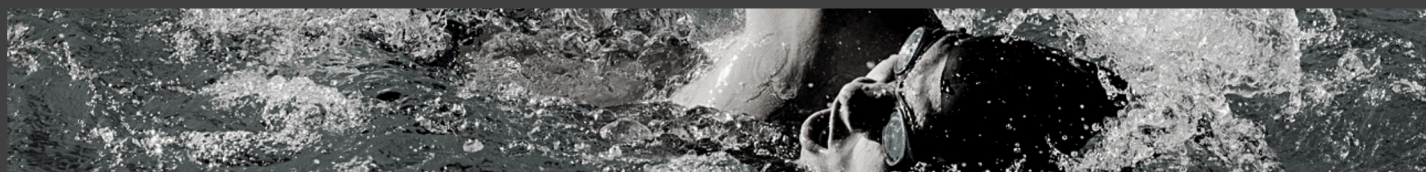
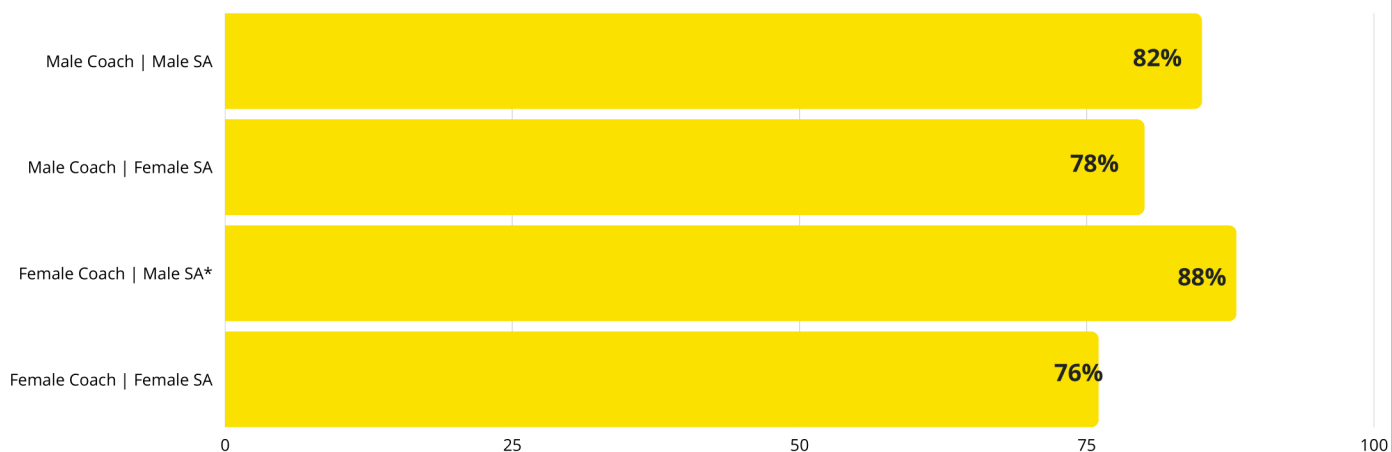
The following charts represent the theme scores given by student-athletes for coaches, according to the gender of the student-athlete. These charts also indicate that the gender dynamic between the coach and the student-athlete plays a role in the overall student-athlete experience.

STRUCTURE



Female athletes provide their coaches with **lower overall scores** across all six themes.

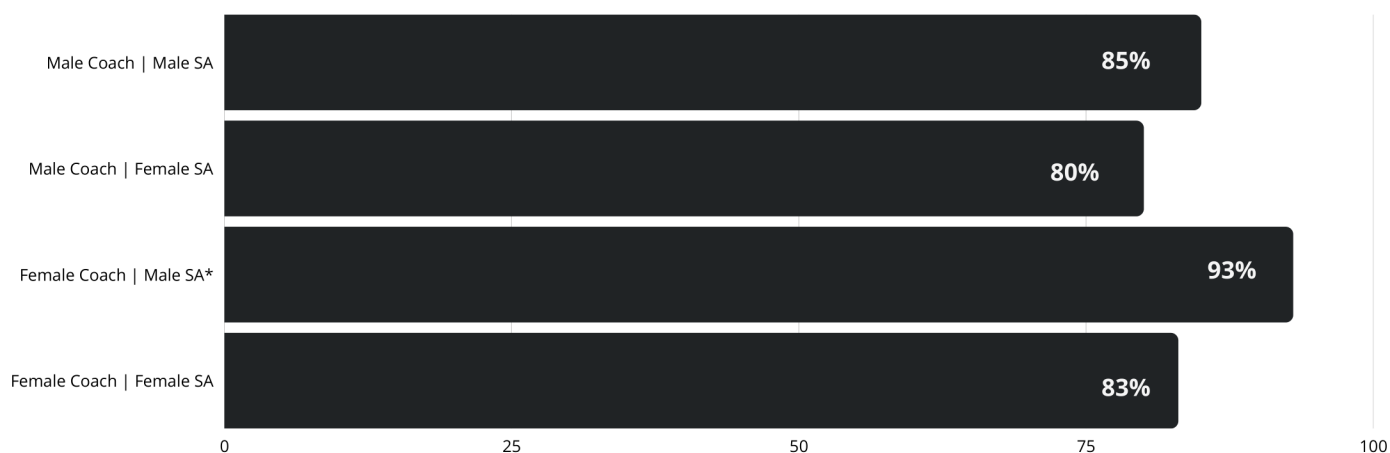
COMMUNICATION



THEME SCORES BY GENDER OF COACH & STUDENT-ATHLETE

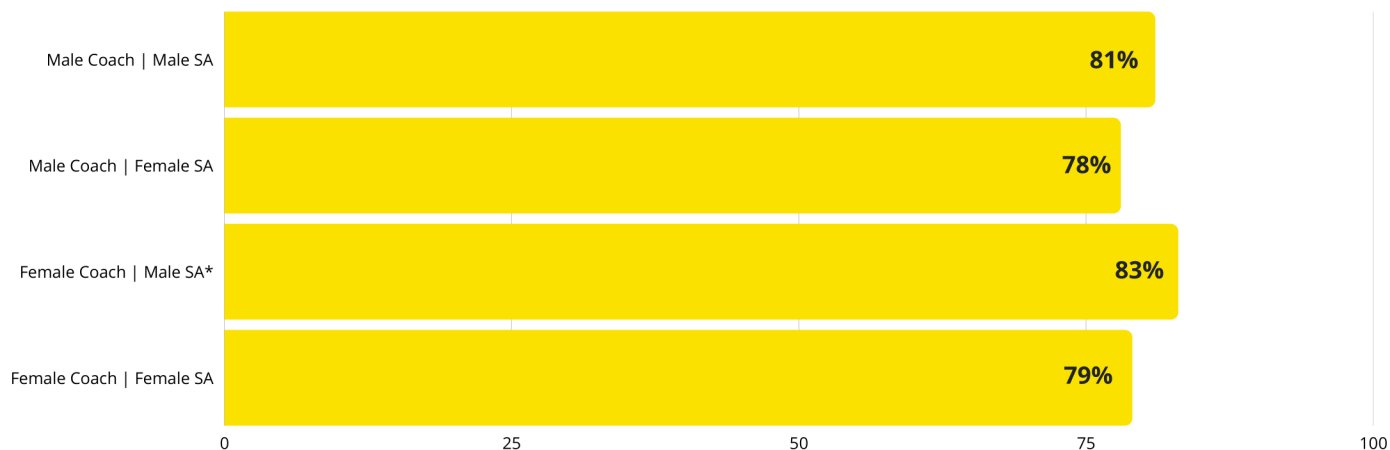
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CHALLENGE



Female coaches paired with male athletes **outperform** other gender combinations across all themes .

SKILL DEVELOPMENT



GOING FROM GOOD TO GREAT

Every AD, club director, and coach knows that accurate data matters. Even small statistical differences in data are meaningful to team outcomes and the athlete experience. These incremental differences in our research may seem inconsequential to some. However, minor increases can lead to significant changes in results. Consider the following statistics:

- In 2014, tennis player Naomi Osaka's percentage of first serves in play was 54%, and her percent of return points won was 40% –which led to her winning 50% of her matches and a world ranking of 250. By 2020 those same stats had improved only slightly; a 4% increase in first serves in play (58%); and a **2%** increase in return points won (42%) – which **led to her winning 34%** more matches (84%) and a world rank of #3.
- A **7%** improvement in winning percentage for a team that plays 30 games equals two more wins. That can lead to a **better seed** in conference or district play and possibly a state championship.
- Take two schools with 300 student-athletes each: one of the schools scores **6%** better in the psychological safety theme – which means they have **18 more athletes** who feel free to be themselves around their coach and teammates. Eighteen more athletes are less afraid of taking the last shot. Eighteen more athletes who provide additional discretionary effort. Eighteen more athletes now have a more positive student-athlete experience.

EVERY PERCENTAGE POINT IN OUR RESEARCH MATTERS BECAUSE WE ARE NOT REPORTING ON WINS AND LOSSES. **ONE PERCENT** IN OUR RESEARCH EQUATES TO MORE LIVES CHANGED BY A COACH. **ONE DATA POINT** IS A YOUNG WOMAN OR MAN HOPING TO MAKE VARSITY OR BE A STARTING PLAYER. WITHIN WHAT SOME VIEW AS POTENTIALLY INSIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGES IS A YOUNG PERSON WHOSE **DREAM** IS TO PLAY AT THE COLLEGIATE LEVEL OR, BETTER YET, SOMEDAY BE A COACH.

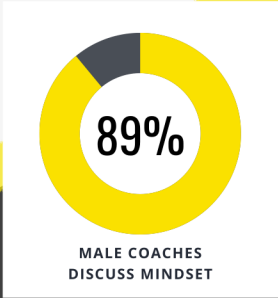
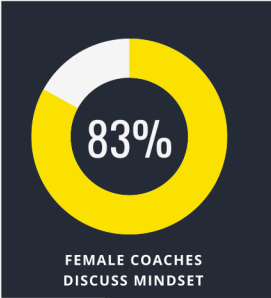


NAOMI OSAKA
IMPROVED HER
FIRST SERVE IN BY **4%**.
HER WORLD RANKINGS
WENT FROM 250 TO
NUMBER **3**.

INSIGHTS

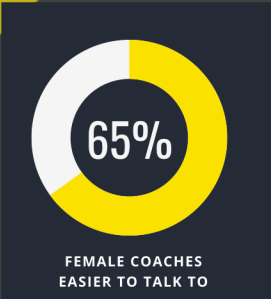
+ 6%

MALE COACHES ARE MORE LIKELY TO TALK ABOUT **MINDSET** OR **ATTITUDE** THAN FEMALE COACHES.



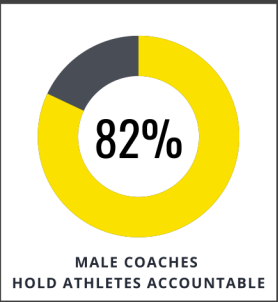
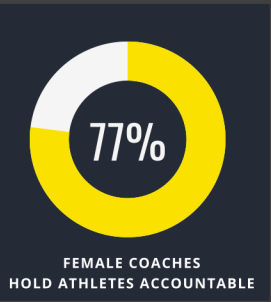
+ 7%

IT'S **EASIER TO TALK** TO FEMALE COACHES ABOUT ISSUES OR PROBLEMS.



+ 5%

MALE COACHES HOLD TEAM MEMBERS MORE **ACCOUNTABLE** THAN FEMALE COACHES.



- 7%

FEMALE COACHES ARE LESS LIKELY TO **OVERREACT**.



CHAT WITH OUR EXPERTS



WILL KLOEFKORN



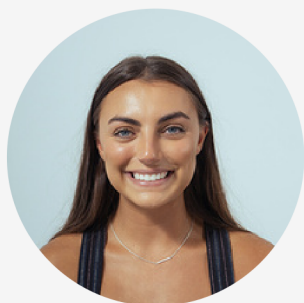
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