

# **Effective Recruitment of Military Women: Developing New Methods**

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After the end of the Cold War, the changed security political situation in Europe led to a rapid downsizing of equipment and personnel among armed forces. More technology was introduced and professionalism increased. Defence doctrines shifted from territorial defence to more international cooperation and peacekeeping operations (Haltiner & Klein, 2005). When the need for new personnel decreased, as a consequence of downsizing and the increased use of advanced technology, a sense of injustice grew among young men who were compelled to serve. More and more armed forces shifted from conscript-based to all-volunteer forces (AVF) (Haltiner & Klein, 2005 ; Szvircsev Tresch, 2015).

The changes in armed forces, resulting from the changed security political situation, have also led to an increased need and new opportunities for women to enter the armed forces. In Segal's (1995, p.759) theory of factors affecting women's participation in the military, and in Carreiras's "refocused" version of Segal's model (2006, p.19), the following military factors shifted to a more favourable situation for women : national security considerations, military technology, force structure, combat-to-support ratio and military accession policies. For example, women have increasingly been seen as a valued resource in peacekeeping operations, because they extend the competencies and opportunities to approach a wider set of people in operational areas. Segal (1995), Carreiras (2006), and Nuciari (2006) all state that all-volunteer formats generate a higher proportion of women in the armed forces compared to draft-based armed forces.

Even though the possibilities for women's participation in the armed forces have increased, there is still a discussion about whether women should be allowed in all positions. Democratic values of equality are weighed against military necessity and readiness, as if one cancelled out the other (Carreiras, 2006). According to Carreiras (2015), the effectiveness argument, used to exclude women from the military, and from combat roles in particular, seems to ignore research results that consistently fail to verify the assumption that women would jeopardize effectiveness. One recent example, showing that the differences between women and men are few, is a study by Woodruff and Kelty (2015), who studied whether gender affects membership goals, pro-organizational behaviour, organizational perception, satisfaction, and identification among US soldiers. They concluded that the results, which showed very few differences regarding identification with the military, should not cause any concern about the integration of women in positions from which they were previously banned.

There are several arguments for increasing the proportion of women in the armed forces. Van der Meulen and Soeters (2007) listed six major reasons why it is important for the armed forces to include women, as well as people with different ethnic backgrounds : the list contained arguments of identification, civil rights, being a reflection of society, improved effectiveness and improved competencies, preventing misconduct, and avoiding political tensions.

Attracting and recruiting women has also been seen as a way to increase the recruitment pool. Many of the European countries that have shifted from conscription-based to AVF have faced recruitment and retention problems. The availability of personnel has very often been satisfactory in the first few years after transition, but has tended to decline later on. This has often been due to the fact that positions have been filled with personnel already in the system ; hence, the demand for new soldiers has been low.<sup>1</sup> Szvircev Tresch (2008) looked at military recruitment problems throughout Europe and North America by having 59 experts from 27 countries complete a questionnaire on military recruitment and retention. This study demonstrated that the main problem in the AVF was the recruitment of enlisted soldiers.

Studies by Eighmey (2006), Manigart (2005) and Szvircev Tresch (2010b) illustrate the link between the situation in the labour market and the ability to recruit individuals into the armed forces. When there are plenty of jobs on the labour market, there are often major recruitment problems for defence organizations. The AVF is competing with civilian employers to recruit personnel (van der Meulen & Soeters, 2007), and attracting and recruiting individuals with the appropriate skills is a challenge.

Yet another hindrance for recruitment to the armed forces is the demographic distribution in many Western countries (Münz, 2007, 2011). The large birth cohorts from the 1940s and 1950s are leaving the labour market, including the armed forces, and will be replaced by smaller birth cohorts. In a few years' time, one of the smallest birth cohorts in Sweden, people born in 1999, will enter it while at the same time bigger cohorts are retiring (Statistics Sweden, 2016). Increasing the recruitment pool with people that are currently under-represented (such as women and individuals of other ethnic minority background) is seen as an opportunity to recruit enough individuals to the defence forces. For the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF), which recently completed its shift to voluntary service, it is important to find ways to recruit women and individuals from different backgrounds, in line with the political will that the Armed Forces should reflect society.

## **The Case of Sweden**

The 2014 White Paper emphasized that the SAF should actively seek to increase the proportion of women at all levels in order to achieve a more even gender distribution (Swedish Armed Forces, 2013). A higher proportion of women is seen as crucial for its

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<sup>1</sup> Manigart, 2003, 2005; Weibull, 2005 ; Jonsson, 2009 ; Szvircev Tresch, 2010a.

credibility and legitimacy. The SAF'S action plan for gender integration (*ibid.*) emphasizes three reasons, in line with van der Meulen and Soeters' (2007) arguments, why the SAF should increase the proportion of women :

- to provide equal rights to influence and participate in society,
- to be an attractive and trustworthy employer,
- to increase the operational impact.

Even though Sweden is considered one of the world's most gender-equal countries, based on economic, political, educational and health-based criteria, the SAF : where women constitute 16% of all full-time personnel, are lagging behind when it comes to gender distribution. While most women are found in civilian service (where they represent 40%), only 6% of officers are women (Swedish Armed Forces, 2016). This fact might seem strange considering that (1) Sweden is highly ranked on the Global Gender Gap Index of gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2015); (2) Sweden scores low on Hofstede's power distance and masculinity dimensions (Hofstede Centre, 2016); (3) the employment rate for Swedish women is the highest in the European Union (Eurostat, 2016); and (4) according to Segal (1995) and Carreiras (2006), Sweden meets the military, political, social and cultural prerequisites associated with a higher degree of female participation in the military. Some explanations of why Sweden lags behind can be found in the time and history factor that Carreiras (2006, p.19) added to Segal's model. Carreiras states that, when it comes to the history of female military involvement, the effect of time is not as significant as is the conscript ratio, i.e. the percentage of conscripts in the total active force, which leads to a lesser degree of female participation, whereas AVF have a greater percentage of women. Now, the SAF have a short history of both equal admission requirements for both women and men and voluntary service. Women were first allowed to join the SAF in 1980 as officers, provided they met the requirements. From 1994 onwards they could join without the expressed intention of a career within the Armed Forces. Conscription was then abandoned in July 2010.<sup>2</sup>

To begin with, the Swedish AVF was able to recruit sufficient personnel of the right quality for basic military training (Jonsson, 2012). However, Weber and Österberg (2015) clearly show that voluntary recruitment at rank and file level has become a problem since conscription was abandoned in Sweden in 2010. In early 2016, the SAF were undermanned by about 800 full-time soldiers and about 6,600 part-time soldiers (Swedish Government Official Report, 2016).

The numbers and proportion of females have increased since the end of the draft, but the attrition of women during selection for basic military training is high. According to Carreiras (2006), one cannot rely on the assumption that an AVF will automatically

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<sup>2</sup> In March 2017 the Swedish Government decided to recall compulsory military service. The conscription will be reintroduced in 2018 and will be gender neutral. The gender neutral conscription should be used as a supplement to the volunteer recruitment in order to guarantee the personnel supply to the Swedish Armed Forces.

increase the number and proportion of women in the military, nor that a written goal will make any difference if it is not followed up by action.

This article focuses on the recruitment of women, and a project aiming to increase the proportion of women who start basic military training in the SAF. First, a short history of female participation in Swedish basic military training is given, as well as a description of the selection process for basic military training. This is followed by a description and results from a project, launched in 2014 by the SAF, in order to take action in accordance with the 2014 White Paper.<sup>3</sup> In cooperation with the Swedish Defence University, the SAF are trying to find successful methods and activities that motivate women and optimize their chances of passing the admission test, and basic military training.

## Female Participation in Swedish Basic Military Training

The number of women applying for military training, as well as the proportion of women nominated for basic military training, has increased since the shift to the AVF. Table 1 shows the number of women who have applied for training and the percentage of women who were nominated for basic military training from 1996 to 2015.

**Table 1:** Numbers and percentage of women who have applied and been nominated for basic military training 1996-2015.

Year	Female applicants	% Females among nominees	Year	Female applicants	% Females among nominees
1996	663	1.2 %	2006	1,598	3.3 %
1997	450	1.0 %	2007	1,566	7.9 %
1998	568	1.2 %	2008 <sup>1</sup>	2,654	6.3 %
1999	724	1.1 %	2009 <sup>2</sup>	16,158	23.3 %
2000	602	1.1 %	2010 <sup>3</sup>	NA	NA
2001	739	1.5 %	2011 <sup>4</sup>	1,932	12.3 %
2002	1,292	2.3 %	2012	2,469	19.1 %
2003	1,318	3.1 %	2013	4,190	16.0 %
2004	1,714	3.5 %	2014 <sup>5</sup>	3,727	15.8 %
2005	1,334	4.1 %	2015 <sup>6</sup>	2,396	15.6 %

Data from the Swedish Defence Recruitment Agency.

Notes :

- (1) The first year women received and could (voluntarily) reply to an aptitude test sent to all men and women who turned 17 years in 2008 (the test was mandatory for men and introduced in 2007).
- (2) In 2009, an information campaign called "Mission 5000" ran in order to increase the number of women.
- (3) Data from 2010 is missing.
- (4) The first year both women and men applied on a voluntary basis.
- (5) Based on 13 months.
- (6) Based on 10 months.

<sup>3</sup> Österberg, Jonsson, Brandow & Eriksson, 2016.

As Table 1 shows, more women are applying for military training when the training is voluntary for both women and men. Women also constitute a higher proportion of the nominees for basic military training in the AVF. In the 1990s women made up about 1% of all those nominated for basic military training, in the early 2000s about 2-4%, in the final years of conscription women represented 6-8%, and with an AVF about 16%. 2009 was a remarkable year, as the SAF and the National Service Administration (now the Swedish Defence Recruitment Agency) tried to increase the numbers of women by means of information and recruitment campaigns. These attempts, combined with a large reduction in positions, resulted in a record number of applications and a higher proportion of women among those nominated.

Although the proportion of women has increased among both applicants and nominees, the SAF's gender distribution remains skewed. In such situations, women are at risk of becoming tokens, with high visibility, assimilation and exclusion,<sup>4</sup> and may need to adapt to the dominant male culture to be seen as legitimate members.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Staged Selection Process for Basic Military Training**

Basic military training is the beginning of a career within the SAF; it is common to all recruits, regardless of branch or location. Basic military training is the first formal step towards becoming a private or squad leader (or equivalents), and provides the prerequisites for becoming an officer upon completion of further training.

The recruitment procedure for basic military training starts with an online questionnaire called the "recruitment test". The questionnaire includes background information, questions about psychological and physical health, and questions related to interest orientation. An initial selection is made on the basis of some of the questions. Individuals who pass the recruitment test are then able to make a reservation for the admission test, where cognitive and physical tests are performed. On the same occasion, the individual is medically examined, interviewed by a psychologist, and gets career coaching from an officer. Depending on which position the applicant is being considered for, she/he is directly nominated, or qualifies for a final selection. The latter procedure is valid for the more physically and intellectually demanding positions. The staged selection process, and the proportion of women and men at each stage, is illustrated in Figure 1.

Studies of the applicants for basic military training (e.g., Jonsson 2016) show that there is a big loss of individuals between application and nomination for basic military training. Of all applicants for basic military training in 2015, only 13.6% of all women were nominated for it and 17.5% of all men (Jonsson, 2016). Many applicants who pass the recruitment test never show up for the admission test. This drop-out rate is slightly bigger among women than among men, as can be seen in Figure 1 (total outcome) and Table 2.

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<sup>4</sup> Kanter, 1993 ; Basham, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Kristiansen & Steder, 2015.

Figure 1 : Outcome of the staged selection process 2015, divided by gender

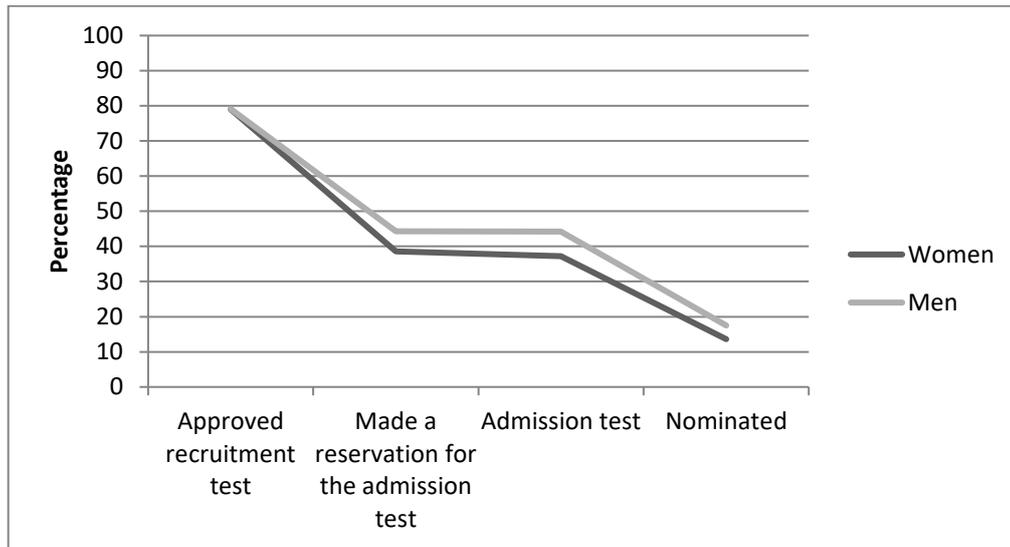


Table 2 : Proportion of women and men qualified for the next stage of the selection process for basic military training 2015, percent.

	Women	Men
Approved by recruitment test	79.0	79.1
Made reservation for admission test*	48.8	56.0
Tested (of those who made a reservation)	82.3	84.3
Nominated (of those who were tested)	36.5	39.6

\*  $p < .001$

In 2015, there was one statistically significant gender difference during the selection process ; women approved by the recruitment test did not make reservations for the admission test to the same extent as men (48.8% vs. 56.0%). This difference resulted in a lower proportion of women in the stages that followed (see Figure 1), even though there was no difference between the proportion of women and men who did the admission test (having made a reservation), and those nominated after the admission test (see Table 2) (Jonsson, 2016).

In 2014, the admission process was slightly changed, from recruitment batches to flexible admission, where applications are handled continuously. Prior to 2014, applicants who passed the recruitment test were contacted and invited to attend the admission test. After everyone in a batch had been tested, there was a final selection. For some positions affirmative action was used, which meant that if one woman and one man had the same results, the position was given to the woman because there are fewer women than men in the SAF. Since the introduction of flexible admission, individuals who pass the recruitment test can choose which date they will take the admission test, as they make the reservation themselves. This action has led to slightly shorter lead times and more individual freedom. This is believed to have increased the number and proportion of applicants who show up for the admission test. With the changed procedure, positions are filled as applicants meet

the requirements ; hence, affirmative action cannot be used. However, in some cases selection for positions and resort to affirmative action were maintained.<sup>6</sup> It was feared that the changed procedure and reduced use of affirmative action would have a negative impact on women entering basic military training. But Jonsson (2016) has shown that the changed admission process has not affected the proportion of females tested and nominated for basic military training so far. In fact, the changed admission process has had no effect on the proportions of tested and nominated applicants at all. The only difference is that the tendency to take the admission test became higher among all applicants when they made the reservation themselves (approx. 80%) in comparison to when they were called to the test (approx. 60%) (Jonsson, 2016).

In order to find out why fewer women than men attended the admission test, Österberg, Jonsson, and Brandow (2015) conducted an attrition survey. The survey was sent to all applicants who passed the recruitment test, but never went to the admission test in the spring of 2015. Of the 1,404 questionnaires that were distributed, 710 answers (51%) were received, of which 24% from women. The results showed that females more often had doubts about their ability to pass the tests than males, that more women than men were already in a university programme, or planned to start studying instead of starting military training, and that, to a greater extent than men, women stated that there were no dates available to take the admission test. These results seem to imply that women wait too long before they feel ready to make the reservation.

In 2016, the same authors probed the reasons why individuals who had passed the admission test did not start basic military training.<sup>7</sup> An Internet survey was sent to 2,393 individuals, of whom 953 (41%) responded (17% were women). The main reason for not starting basic training, more frequently stated among women than among men (44% versus 28%), was that the test results were not good enough for the position the applicant wanted.

## **Effective Recruitment of Women**

In 2014 a project was initiated by the SAF to find effective methods to recruit women. The aims of the project were to:

- increase the number of women who start basic military training, by increasing the motivation of female applicants;
- increase opportunities for, and motivate female applicants to get the best possible results at the admission test;
- give female applicants a better basis for decisions about the right training, the right position and the right job;
- identify why female applicants drop out of the selection process;<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Swedish Armed Forces, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Brandow, Österberg & Jonsson, 2016. The period under study extended from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015.

<sup>8</sup> The results are presented above.

- improve knowledge within the SAF about activities intended to generate more gender equality in recruitment;
- evaluate activities performed by military units as part of the project;
- should they prove successful, implement such methods in all military units.

On two occasions during spring 2014, the Swedish Defence University conducted focus group studies with 4 female soldiers and one platoon consisting of 12 women and 18 men.<sup>9</sup> The aim was to find beneficial factors leading to SAF contracts after basic military training and to propose improvements to increase the proportion of women. Factors identified as promoting recruitment of women were:

- personal meetings with opportunities to interact and ask questions;
- identification with people within the SAF;
- more female visibility in commercials, in the media, in the selection process and in training;
- openness about what it is like to be a woman in the SAF;
- knowing one's potential, and what the future might hold.

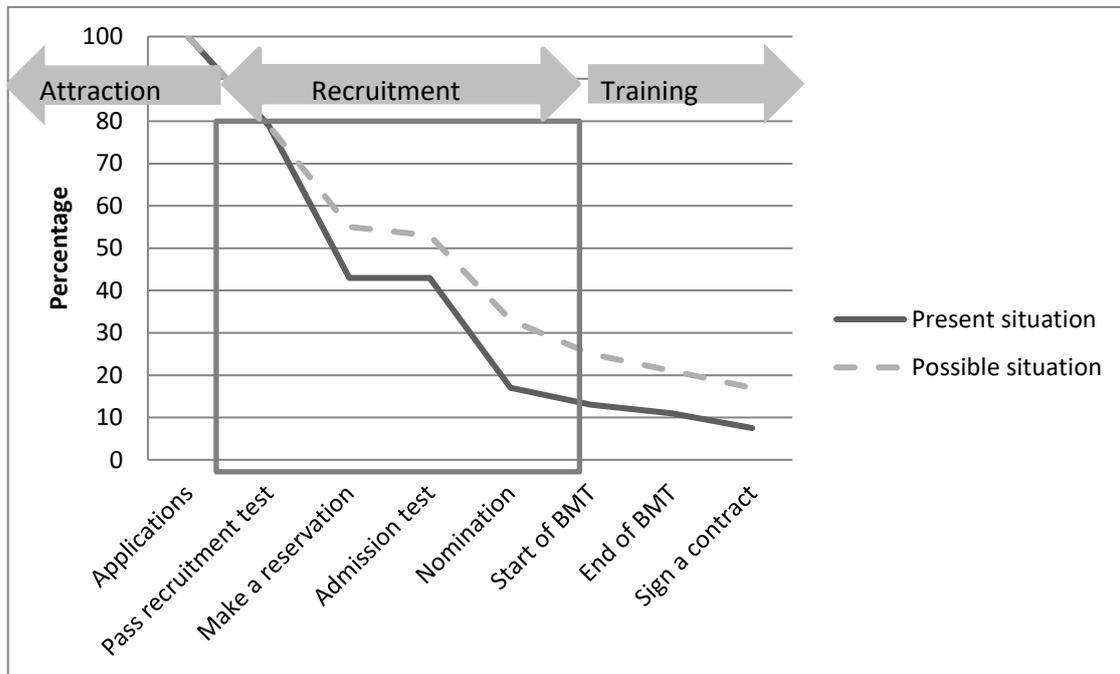
On the basis of these results, a design and method for the project were formulated. The idea behind the project was to establish personal contact with women as soon as possible after they have passed the recruitment test; i.e. when they have shown interest in the Armed Forces and also met some basic skill requirements. When the project started, it was believed that the activities would increase the women's motivation to serve in the SAF by encouraging them, responding to their questions and doubts, providing opportunities to meet like-minded women, female recruits and officers who could talk about their everyday life in the SAF. Activities would prepare the women and increase their chances of passing the tests, coach them towards units and positions that would suit them, and increase employment possibilities ; they offer information so that the female applicants could make better informed decisions about a future career within the SAF. It is equally important, both for the individual and the SAF, that individuals find out whether or not a career in the armed services is for them at an early stage, before they proceed in the selection process and possibly become a costly drop-out.

By moving part of the unit's resources from attraction to recruitment, the aim was to increase the proportion of women accepted for basic military training, and in turn reduce attrition. The project is targeted at the recruitment phase, as shown in the box in Figure 2 (next page). The phase before the box is the attraction phase and the phases afterwards are training and employment. Instead of attracting more applicants, efforts are made to retain applicants already in the selection process. Encouraging more women to take the admission test, improving their chances of passing the test and finding an attractive position, could reduce the gradient of the attrition curve in Figure 2.

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<sup>9</sup> Österberg, Jonsson & Eriksson, 2015.

**Figure 2 :** Attrition from the staged selection for basic military training and during basic military training (a hypothetical outline, from 100% applicants)



## Method

Contact information for the women who passed the recruitment test was retrieved every second week from the Swedish Defence Recruitment Agency in the period January 2015 to April 2016. Only those women with a geographical connection to a participating unit were selected to participate in the project. The project management sent an e-mail with information about the project and congratulated the women on succeeding in the recruitment test. Based on geographical proximity, the contact information was divided and distributed to 16 military units who participated in the project. The units represented the Army, the Air Force and the Navy, and were spread between the south and north of Sweden. By involving the units, knowledge about gender equality and women's situation in recruitment was spread to a wider audience within the SAF. Personnel in the units, e.g. (male and female) recruitment coordinators, contacted the women by phone or e-mail. The purpose of this contact was to welcome female applicants to the armed forces, to inform them about the project, to answer questions they might have and to invite them to participate in special activities organized by the project. The recruitment coordinators also gave information about other activities (such as military weekends) that can contribute to maintaining interest in the SAF, giving a better foundation for a decision to join or not, and to prepare women for further engagement. The activities arranged by the project varied from visiting units, ships or recruitment offices, to information evenings and physical training activities. The latter activities aimed to increase their knowledge about the tests and their chances of passing the admission test, based on the findings from Österberg *et al.* (2015) and Brandow *et al.* (2016).

The units reported the results from their work with the contacts (i.e. numbers contacted, how many wanted to participate, etc.), the implementation of activities, and forwarded the participants' evaluations of the activities to the Swedish Defence University for analysis. Each spring and autumn, the project team and one representative of the SAF Headquarters visited all participating units and reported their results from activities and evaluations. The Swedish Defence University used the data from the contact lists, together with status reports from the units, to evaluate the project and the various methods used in the recruitment of women. Performance monitoring was ongoing and the units received continuous feedback, which enabled continuous development and improvement of the working methods. The project did not contribute any financial resources or additional staff, and the units themselves chose the activities and methods locally.

### **Results from Contact Lists**

From January 2015 to April 2016, the contact details of 2,781 women who passed the recruitment test were distributed to the participating units, i.e. 76% of all women who passed the recruitment test.<sup>10</sup> The units attempted to get in contact with 1,840 (66%) of these women, and actually established contact with 712 (i.e. 39% of the attempts). Of the established contacts the majority (78%) were interested in receiving more information and being invited to future activities. While in January-May 2015 the units established contact with 49% of the women, that proportion went down to 19% in the period June-December 2015. This reduction might be due to the more frequent use of phone calls at the beginning of the project (Österberg *et al.*, 2016).

The project ended in summer 2016, and the methods and findings were implemented by the SAF's Human Resource Centre in their regular recruitment activities.

### **Results from Activities**

The units reported evaluations from 37 activities with 352 participating women. Their age varied between 18 and 53 years ( $M = 22.8$  years). Whereas 48% of the women were in gainful employment, 41% were pursuing higher education. Four out of ten participants had previously had contact with the Swedish Armed Forces, while a few had participated in other activities organized by military units, or had been in touch with the SAF through youth activities.

Women who participated in the activities were very positive. They rated the activities as highly valuable (4.6 on a scale from 1-5). There were no differences between activities; all activities and all military units received good evaluations. Among the most important things they learned from participating in the project was the insight that women are wanted and needed in the SAF; they also learned about the many career opportunities in the military; finally, they gained valuable insights about themselves and their confidence

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<sup>10</sup> 3,633 women passed the recruitment test during the same period. Not all women were covered in the geographical division among participating military units. Most of the individuals excluded lived in the regions close to Stockholm, where a high proportion of the population lives.

was strengthened. Hopefully, this can lead to more women making reservations for the admission test. All in all, the participating women feel more secure in their decision to start basic military training, and have been inspired and motivated.

Among participants, 94% said that they had been very well treated in the units, and 99.7% would recommend the activity to a friend. A large majority (88%) stated that they intended to start basic military training. One result indicating that the project was aimed at the right target group was that the proportion intending to start basic military training (95%) was higher among those contacted by the project than among those (79%) who were not.

The evaluations from the women revealed exclusively positive experiences such as *“super cool and good !”* and *“very good initiative”*. Recurring themes were that the organization and content of the activities were appreciated and found to be *“great fun to meet girls in the SAF”* and *“very good to try clothing, equipment, etc.”*. The activities were also described as informative, for example, *“very good information, instructive as well as inspirational”* and *“very informative and now I’m even more excited about going to basic training”*. Participants displayed great interest and wanted more information, and exercises that were more practical. Participants also emphasized that they were made to feel welcome (*“friendly crew answered all our questions”*), and experienced *“huge commitment from all on board”*.

Many stressed the importance of activities targeted at women, such as *“good to do more to focus on specific target groups. A bit unsure about applying for basic military training as a girl, because most are men. Nice to be pepped up”*, *“good for the Armed Forces to try to mirror society”* as well as *“it was clear that more women are needed in the SAF”*. Fifty percent stated that they felt more prepared for basic military training after participating in an activity. For example, participants said that the most important thing they had learned was about the admission tests and how to train to pass them, and *“what is important to know, in order to become a soldier”*. Some individuals highlighted career options, for example: *“how the SAF works, different career options I did not know about”*, *“information about employment conditions and terms of service”*, as well as *“how to make a career in the military as a woman”*. Other individuals, instead, emphasized that they had learned something more specific, such as *“how it is to be a pilot and technician”* and *“how it works in the Navy”*. Furthermore, women noted that the most important thing they had learned from the activity was personal development and insights about themselves, such as *“I can do more than I thought”* and *“dare to try different things even when someone else is watching”*. The units that arranged activities found that while the Armed Forces usually communicate hard facts, that was *not* what these women generally asked for. Questions asked were often about everyday life as a soldier. Meeting in person with recruitment coordinators and military staff has been seen as important for women to proceed in the recruitment process. Military units have gained new perspectives on recruitment and retention by participating in this project.

## Conclusion

If the ambition is to increase the numbers and proportion of women at all levels in the organization, increasing the participation of women in basic military training is an essential starting point. As in many other countries, the percentage of women in basic military training has increased in Sweden since the move to an AVF, as Segal (1995) and Carreiras (2006) predicted. Nevertheless, the proportion is still limited: its current level does not preclude the risk of women becoming tokens, which is why the 2014 White Paper wants to further increase their presence. It is clear, as Carreiras (2006) noted, that increased numbers of women and gender equality will not occur spontaneously as a function of time: it is more likely to depend on government and armed forces policy and decision-making processes. However, political efforts do not always yield substantial improvements either: Carreiras (2015) cites the example of the Scandinavian countries. The project described in this article was a reaction to the fact that there were very few initiatives and actions to achieve the ambition expressed in the 2014 White Paper.

This method development project shows that approaching those who have already shown interest in the military is perceived as a winning concept for recruitment. When military units contact women in the target group, it is important to take time to fully explain the project and to sell the message that the SAF is interested in their abilities. Likewise, it is important to be able to offer something that individuals can benefit from at the admission test, and to maintain their commitment, so that they start and complete the training. Personal contacts with various employees of different backgrounds and in different positions have proved successful; so have physical training activities. When activities are arranged, it is important to have a relaxed event with plenty of time for questions and discussion. The fact that all project activities were highly appreciated may indicate that the most important thing is that the SAF *do* something: the type of activity is of less importance. The findings as regards activities resemble those of the classical 1930s Hawthorne studies, which found that rather than changes in physical or social conditions, what affected (female) workers' productivity most was the fact that someone was actually concerned about their workplace and paid special attention to them.<sup>11</sup>

The women who were contacted by the project and participated in activities arranged by units were likely to have a greater tendency to complete the admission test and basic military training. These women have already established a relationship with the Swedish Armed Forces, have a better basis for decisions and/or have had better coaching to face the tests that lie ahead. In short, what the project did was to satisfy some of the most elementary human needs; to feel included and to be seen as important and competent to make a contribution (see Schutz, 1958).

The project has also yielded results in the form of positive spin-off effects. Among other things, women in the project started to bring their friends to the activities, who also

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<sup>11</sup> Mayo, 1949.

later applied for basic military training. The project seems to have been in demand even outside the direct target group, which suggests that the participants seem to work as ambassadors for the project, and that the military units' marketing of the project works.

It is still too soon to draw any definitive conclusions as to whether the project will bear lasting fruits, i.e. increase the proportion of women signing a contract with the SAF: recruits must go through the selection process and military training first, and this takes time.

Needless to say, while it is an important factor in increasing female participation at all levels in the organization, initial recruitment is only one of the problems facing female integration in the armed forces. Today, retention has become as much of a challenge as recruitment itself. But preliminary cost estimations suggest that the SAF can save a substantial amount of money by generalizing the various measures proposed by the project. The cost of attrition, not least among those who complete basic military training but never sign a contract, runs to millions of euros per year. By giving individuals a better basis for decision-making and better career coaching, costs can be reduced during the selection process and basic military training due to lower drop-out ratios.

The methods used to increase the number and percentage of women starting basic military training can also be used on other target groups. So far the method has also been applied to the selection process for the Swedish Military Academy. Information letters, phone calls from cadets and officers were used during the 2016 recruitment. Results showed that the number of applicants who completed the selection process and the proportion among them of those who actually joined as officer cadets increased compared to previous years.<sup>12</sup>

The methods adopted for effective recruitment of women will be equally important when conscription is reintroduced in 2018. In contrast to the old draft, this time Swedish conscription, meant as a complement to volunteer recruitment in order to guarantee sufficient numbers of recruits, will be gender-neutral.

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<sup>12</sup> Österberg, Jonsson, Brandow, Klockare & Eriksson, 2017.

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