



Special Olympics' research and evaluation work has advanced knowledge of the needs of people with intellectual disabilities (ID) and their families and has improved knowledge of the cultural and environmental factors that are obstacles to people with ID reaching their full potential. Special Olympics' research is a **catalytic force for social and policy change** around the globe.

AREAS OF INTEREST – SPECIAL OLYMPICS RESEARCH:

The Scope of the Need. Before anything can be done to help people with ID live fuller, more satisfying lives, policy-makers and others need to know as much as possible about the difficulties they face. Special Olympics' research has helped fill this knowledge gap by investigating topics such as the attitudes the general public has towards people with ID, the general perception of their capabilities, barriers to employment and other aspects of community inclusion, and their health status and access to quality health care.

The Scope of Special Olympics. Many people are unaware of the size of Special Olympics and the extent of its programming, but many people think of Special Olympics as an occasional sporting event in the United States that benefits children with ID. While this may have been true decades ago, today Special Olympics is so much more. To help build understanding of Special Olympics, the organization compiles data about itself such as the number of athletes we reach and the international scope of our programming,

The Impact of Special Olympics. Special Olympics research and evaluation has shown that the movement has made a significant impact on its athletes, the families of athletes, and the community at large. Special Olympics has collected data on the effect on athlete self-esteem, ability to be employed, and social skills, as well as the influence participation has on volunteers attitudes, family members' cohesiveness, and other impacts.

Special Olympics Initiatives. Central to the success of Special Olympics programming is the evaluation of its initiatives. By thorough and scientific examination, Special Olympics can determine the effectiveness of its programs and make changes to them to maximize impact.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

- While most people with intellectual disabilities (85%) are only mildly impaired, the public overestimates the severity of their disability.
- More than 2/3 of people feel those with intellectual disability receive the same or better health care than others. In fact, they often receive substandard care or no care at all.
- Nearly all Special Olympics athletes (more than 90%) from all countries studied benefited from increased self-esteem and self-confidence after participating.
- A recent study found that 44% of adults with ID who were present or past Special Olympics athletes were employed, compared with only 28% of adults with ID who have never experienced Special Olympics. Children participating in Young Athletes showed significant improvement in their motor skills and some a 7-month gain after only 2.3 months of participation.
- Participation in Unified Sports leads to greater understanding and acceptance among a large majority (82%) of participants without disabilities.