

SPECIAL OLYMPICS FITNESS 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

**A global summary of metrics
and programming successes
from fitness activations in 2024**

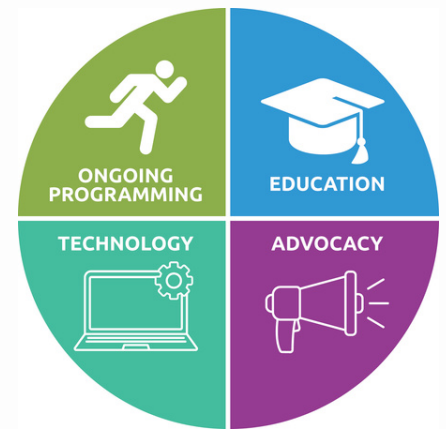


Special Olympics
Health

MADE
POSSIBLE BY **Golisano** FOUNDATION

Background

This report highlights 2024 data from Special Olympics Programs receiving Healthy Communities Impact Grants (HIGs) as well as the global Census, showcasing successes, impact on athlete health and fitness, and progress toward the 2022-2026 [Special Olympics Fitness Strategic Plan](#) goals. The report is structured around the strategy's four key areas — Ongoing Programming, Education, Technology, and Advocacy.



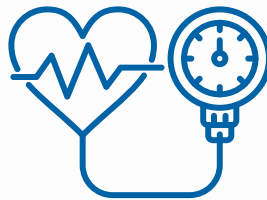
Health and Fitness Overview

Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® data provides insights into the health and fitness habits of athletes, the 2024 data below highlights key areas related to physical activity, nutrition, and overall well-being.



40%

of athletes are
overweight or obese



39%

of athletes have
high blood pressure



37%

of athletes have
balance concerns



52%

of athletes engage in **3 days or less**
of weekly physical activity



64%

of athletes consume **less than**
3 servings of fruits and
vegetables daily

Data source: 2024 Healthy Athletes Health Promotion and FUNfitness global screening data



Ongoing Programming

Ongoing fitness programming provides high quality opportunities that support Special Olympics athletes in achieving higher levels of fitness.

432,698 

People with ID participating in
**structured
fitness programming**



2026 Objective: 700,000

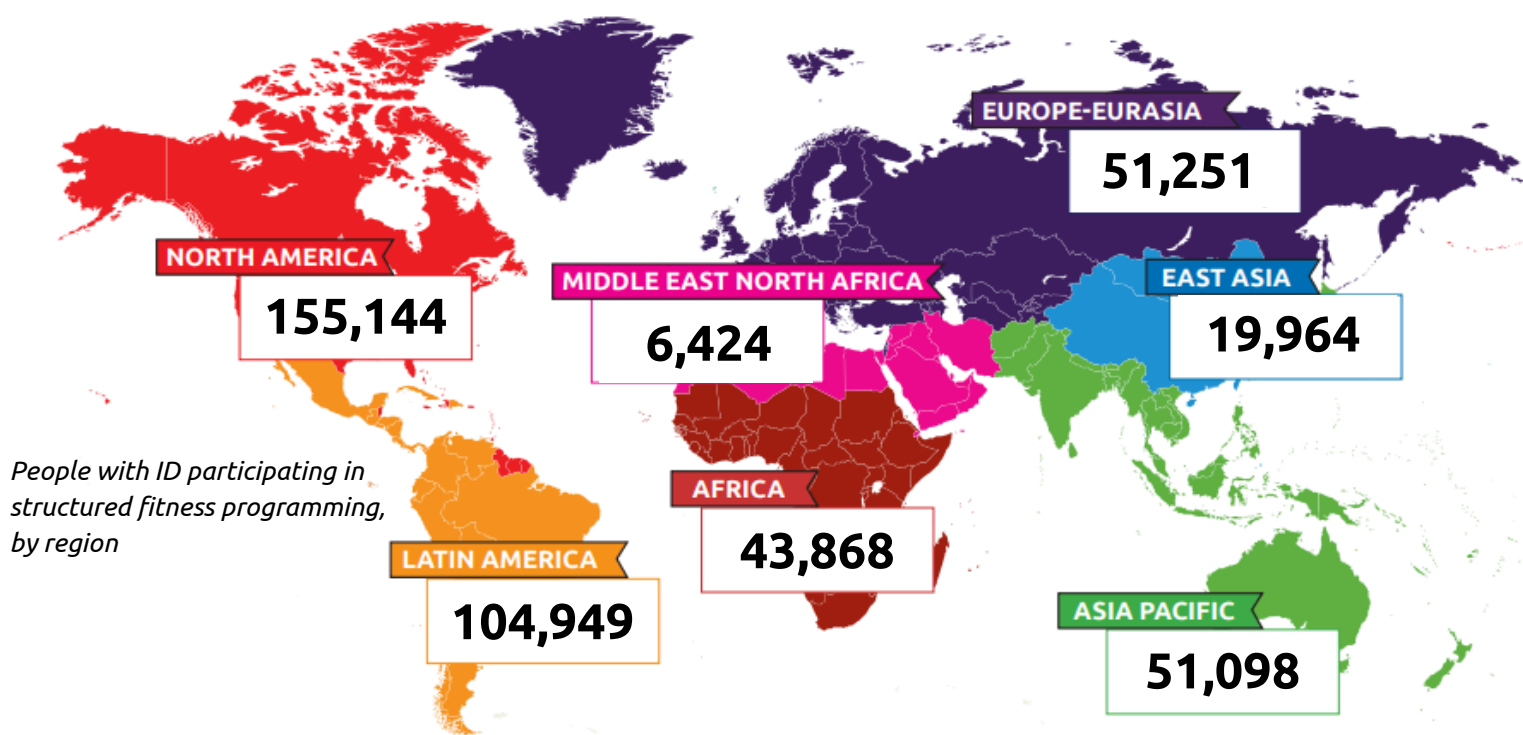
301,126 

People with ID participating in
**structured fitness programming
6 weeks or longer**



2026 Objective: 550,000

Global Participation by Region



Data source: 2024 Special Olympics Census



What's the Impact?

The Lifestyle Survey measures athlete improvements in health and behaviors pre- and post-program. Check out the impact of ongoing fitness programming on athletes!



*Where can I
find the
Lifestyle Survey?*

SCAN ME



improved confidence in
doing physical activity



improved physical
activity knowledge



improved confidence in
eating healthy

Data source: 2024 Lifestyle Survey-Special Olympics fitness evaluation survey



"High 5 has been a great resource for our classroom. We love using the High 5 activity cards as part of our dynamic warm up and during our fitness stations!"

*-Felicia Durst, educator,
Marquette High School, Missouri,
National Banner Unified
Champion School*

In Action: Fitness in Schools

79,909



School-based participants in
structured fitness programming
6 weeks or longer

Data source: Healthy Communities Impact Grant reporting

Three U.S. Programs—Wyoming, Missouri, and Maryland—piloted High 5 lesson plans, which promote physical activity, nutrition, and hydration habits while engaging in activities to improve flexibility, strength, and endurance. Most students reported enjoying the lessons. Revisions have been made to the lesson plans based on pilot feedback, with expanded pilots using updated lesson plans happening in 2025.



Education

Education equips Special Olympics leaders to promote adoption of healthy lifestyle behaviors among athletes.

17,641 

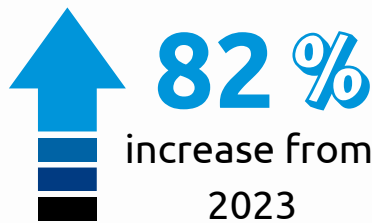
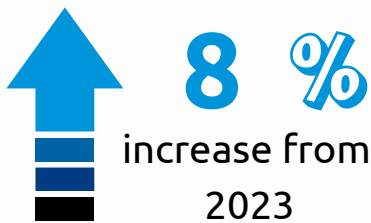
Number of **sports coaches** trained in fitness

8,827 

Number of **fitness professionals** trained in inclusive fitness

390 

Number of athletes trained as **Fitness Captains**



71 %
Fitness Captains are
engaging in Athlete
Leadership for the first time

Data source: Healthy Communities Impact Grant reporting (Golisano 2024; CDC Y3 Aug 2023-July 2024), Special Olympics Learning Portal, & the American Council on Exercise Learning Management System



"I take immense pride in the fact that I have learned many valuable fitness tips that I didn't know before...Sharing this knowledge with others makes me feel accomplished and motivated to continue growing as a leader."

*- Japhet Narrey, Fitness Captain,
SO Papua New Guinea*

In Action: Fitness Captains

Papua New Guinea trained 23 Fitness Captains to serve as role models on their teams. These athletes inspire their peers, foster confidence, and share fitness knowledge. By demonstrating essential exercises like warm-ups and cool-downs, they help prevent injuries and enhance workouts. Beyond training sessions, Fitness Captains promote a lasting culture of health and inclusion, encouraging all athletes to stay active and engaged.



Technology

Technology builds awareness of fitness and health behaviors to facilitate health behavior change.

6,779



Number of users in
**Special Olympics
Fitness Apps**

6



Number of Programs
participating in the **SO
Fitness App Initial Pilot**

16



Number of **Fitness
Challenges** conducted in
Special Olympics Fitness
Apps

Data sources: Special Olympics Fitness App (NEW) and SO FitNow app (to be discontinued July 2025)



"[The app] made me eat more fruits and vegetables. It helped me to drink more water. I love juices but with all that sugar, this helped me to drink more water."

*-Sharon Johnson, Special Olympics
Arkansas Athlete & Coach*

In Action: SO Fitness App

Six Programs participated in the new Special Olympics Fitness App pilot to test features and functionality. The new app features a simplified registration process, enhanced visuals to track progress towards goals, and consistent reminders to support participants' physical activity, nutrition, hydration, and Healthy Minds activities. Using feedback from the pilot, the next version of the app will be released publicly on the Apple and Google Play stores in August 2025! This version will feature wearable integration, increased prompts, and encouraging messages to promote tracking healthy behaviors, sleep, and more!



Advocacy

Advocacy increases accessible fitness opportunities for all individuals with intellectual disabilities. An important way to do this is through local, national, and global partnerships.

3



Number of **Special Olympics International** Fitness Partnerships

204



Number of **Special Olympics Program** Gym Partnerships

Data source: Healthy Communities Impact Grant reporting (Golisano 2024; CDC Y3 Aug 2023-July 2024) & SOI fitness partnerships



Local-Level Partnerships

Special Olympics South Africa partnered with Cathsseta to train 10 athletes in a one year Coaching Science learnership program. This partnership creates pathways for employment in gyms while developing skills to implement fitness programming. Working with Physical IQ, a renowned South African-based fitness company known for their accredited classes, this partnership fosters inclusivity within South Africa's fitness industry.

In Action: Partnerships

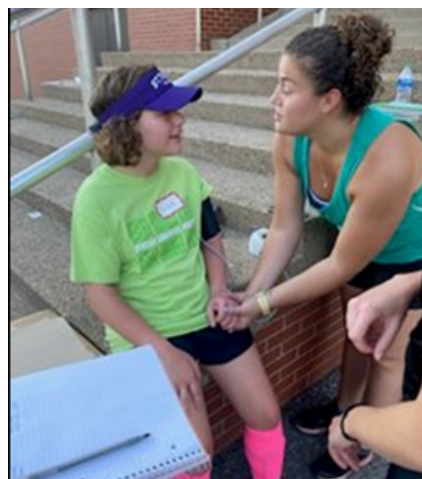
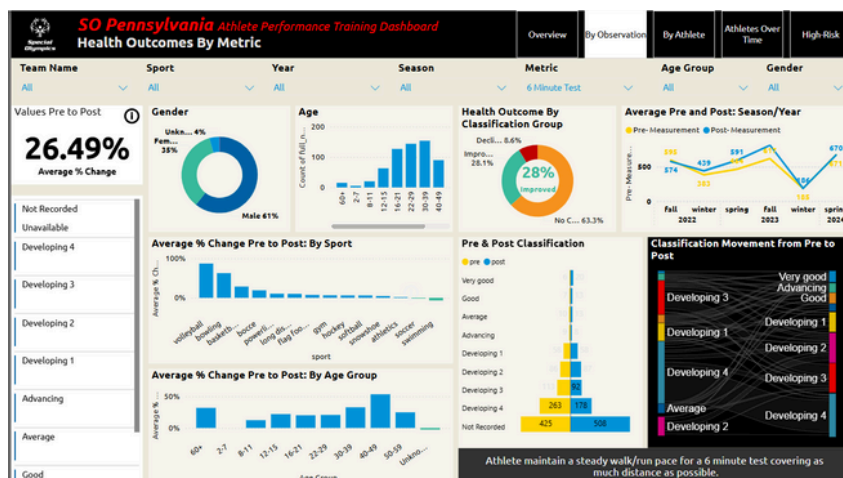
Special Olympics International and the American Council on Exercise (ACE) partner to provide free training to fitness professionals on supporting individuals with ID, as well as a Community Physical Activity Leader course to empower people with and without ID to lead inclusive fitness programs. ACE also highlights Special Olympics athletes and their fitness journeys through social media, inspiring awareness in the fitness industry.



Evaluation Spotlight

Data-Driven Fitness: Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA)

SOPA partnered with the Research & Evaluation team to turn data into actionable insights! With support in selecting evaluation tools, creating a dynamic visualization dashboard, developing one-pagers, and interpreting results, the SOPA team transformed their program data into meaningful outcomes.



Contact for Support

Get support from the Fitness and Research & Evaluation teams in implementing and evaluating fitness programming, using this report, and leveraging existing fitness partnerships and data. Together, we're creating a culture of fitness!

fitness@specialolympics.org

